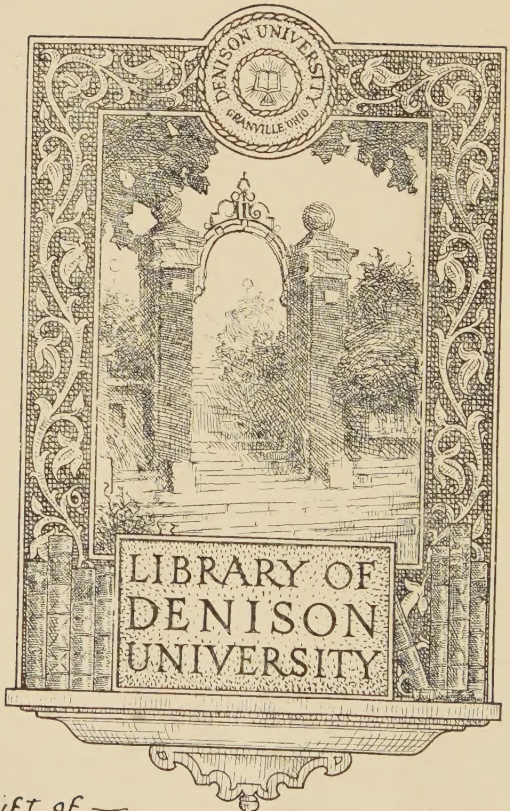

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MADAME DE STAËL
HER TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS

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MADAME DE STAËL

From an engraving after the picture by F. Gérard

MADAME DE STAËL

HER TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS: By Lieut.-Col. ANDREW C. P. HAGGARD, D.S.O. Author of "Sidelights on the Court of France," "Louis the XIV. in Court and Camp," "The Regent of the Roués," "Thérèse of the Revolution," etc. :: ::

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CORRECTION

On page 102 *of this volume Tallien's name is included in error with that of Talleyrand as being one of those whom Napoleon ordered to marry their mistresses. Tallien actually married the lovely Thérèse Cabarrus at the end of December,* 1794.

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DEDICATION TO
SIR H. RIDER HAGGARD, K.B.E.

Dear Rider,

As a slight token of brotherly affection I inscribe to you this book, written under the hospitable roof of your picturesque archway house at St. Leonards.

A writer yourself of many books, you have delighted the world, offending none. The talented authoress whose vicissitudes I depict was not so fortunate. In the opinion of Napoleon she wrote not wisely and too much, with the result that she endured years of exile at his hands. The following pages dwell to a great extent upon the constant efforts of Madame de Staël to subdue by her pen the giant whom she failed to win by her womanly wiles.

That you may be entertained by the relation of the struggles and successes of this wonderful woman is, dear Rider, the hope of your affectionate brother,

Andrew C. P. Haggard.

St. Leonards-on-Sea, 1922.

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FOREWORD

To gain an accurate insight into the stormy temperament yet magnetic power of attraction of the ardent Germaine de Staël, nothing is so enlightening as a glance taken here and there within the pages of Benjamin Constant's *Journal Intime.*

A couple of extracts will suffice. In March, 1806, we find the distracted friend recording :

" Je reçois une lettre de Madame de Staël. C'est l'ébranlement de l'univers et le mouvement du chaos !

" Et cependant—avec ses défauts, elle est pour moi supérieure à tout.—Je me décide à la rejoindre à Auxerre."

Again, an entry made by Benjamin at the same epoch, when at Dôle with his sick father, reveals the soul-shaking effect caused merely by the receipt of a communication from the woman whose nature contained the elements of the whirlwind :

" Mon père est avec moi doux et affectueux, cela me fait du bien. Mais une lettre de Madame de Staël vient m'y chercher. Tous les volcans sont moins flamboyants qu'elle !

" Qu'y faire ? La lutte me fatigue, couchons nous dans la barque et dormons au milieu de la tempête."

This woman with the nature of a whirlwind of fire, " more flaming than all the volcanoes," formed early the intention of dominating Napoleon. Failing in this,

with all her ability she sought to confound his policies. Thus ensued a duel which lasted for years, and in which both the combatants suffered. While Madame de Staël filled Europe with her cries of hatred and distress, the subjugator of that Europe was forced in the midst of his most sanguinary campaigns to remain constantly on the alert, in order to defend himself from the fair antagonist working for his downfall.

A. C. P. H.

MADAME DE STAËL
Her Trials and Triumphs

CHAPTER I

PRELUDE—EDWARD GIBBON AND SUZANNE CURCHOD

In the year 1751 a young fellow, only fourteen years of age, went to Magdalen College at Oxford, and in the same year displayed his budding talent by writing *The Age of Sesostris, Conqueror of Asia,* which work he burnt in later years.

The boy was Edward Gibbon, who, after becoming a Roman Catholic at the age of sixteen, was sent by his father to Switzerland, to continue his education in the house of a Calvinist minister named M. Pavilliard, under the influence of which gentleman he became a Protestant again at Lausanne eighteen months later.

The young fellow, while leading the life of gaiety natural to his age in company with a friend named Deyverdun, became an apt student of the classics and was soon a proficient in French, in which tongue he wrote before long as fluently as in English. With young Deyverdun he worked, and in his company Edward Gibbon also played. After visiting frequently at the house of the celebrated Voltaire at Monrepos, and after being present when the distinguished French

philosopher played in his own comedies and sentimental pieces, the young fellow's thoughts soon turned to the theme which was the continual subject of conversation of the ladies and gentlemen who were Voltaire's guests and formed the company of amateurs with whom the great dramatic writer was in the habit of rehearsing his plays. This was, as might have been suspected in such a society, the theme of love.

As it happened, there was in the habit of visiting Lausanne a young lady who was a perfect paragon. Her name was Suzanne Curchod, and she was half Swiss and half French, her father being a Swiss pastor and her mother a Frenchwoman.

Very handsome and sprightly in appearance, the fair Suzanne was well instructed in sciences and languages. Her wit, beauty, and erudition made her a prodigy and an object of universal admiration upon the occasion of her visits to her relations in Lausanne. Soon an intimate connection existed between Edward Gibbon and herself; he frequently accompanied her to stay at her mountain home at Crassy, while at Lausanne also they indulged in their dream of felicity. Edward loved the brilliant Suzanne with a union of desire, friendship, and tenderness, and was in later years proud of the fact that he was once capable of feeling such an exalted sentiment. There is no doubt that, had he been able to consult his own inclinations alone, Gibbon would have married Mademoiselle Curchod, but, the time coming when he was forced to return to his home in England, his father declared that he would not hear of "such a strange alliance."

"Thereupon," says Gibbon in his autobiography, "I yielded to my fate—sighed as a lover, obeyed as a son, and my wound was insensibly healed by time, absence, and new habits of life."

These habits of life included four or five years' service in the Hampshire Militia, in which corps Suzanne's lover became a captain, the regiment being embodied during the period of the Seven Years' War.

Upon returning to Lausanne, at the age of twenty-six, in 1763, Edward Gibbon was warmly received by his old love, but he heard that she had been flirting with others, and notably with his friend M. Deyverdun. He himself, while now mixing with an agreeable society of twenty unmarried young ladies who, without any chaperons, mingled with a crowd of young men of all nations, also "lost many hours in dissipation."

He was not long in showing Suzanne that he no longer found her indispensable to his happiness, with the result that she assailed him, although in vain, with angry reproaches. Notwithstanding that she begged Gibbon to be her friend if no longer her lover, while vowing herself to be confiding and tender, he acted hard-heartedly and declined to return to his old allegiance, coldly replying: "I feel the dangers that continued correspondence may have for both of us."

It is impossible to feel otherwise than sorry for the brilliant Suzanne at this period, as although from her subsequent manœuvres it became evident that her principal object in life was to obtain a rich husband, from the manner in which she humiliated herself to him it is evident that she was passionately in love with

the author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*

Eventually the neglected damsel gave up the siege of an unwilling lover, while assuring her formerly devoted Edward that the day would come " when he would regret the irreparable loss of the too frank and tender heart of Suzanne Curchod."

Had the pair been united, one wonders what would have been the characteristics of the offspring of an English literary man like Gibbon, who became perhaps the world's greatest historian, and a beautiful woman of mixed nationality, whose subsequent career, although gilded with riches and adorned with a position of power, displays nothing above the mediocre and commonplace.

Edward Gibbon's fame, which was not long in coming, was his own, and will remain for so long as a love of history and literature exists in the world, whereas that of Suzanne Curchod rests upon two circumstances—the first that she was once the sweetheart of Gibbon, the second that she was the mother of a Madame de Staël.

When finally cast off by the Englishman, the Swiss pastor's daughter remembered that, if pretty, she was poor, and had her way to make in the world. She commenced to play fast and loose with a M. Correvon, a rich lawyer, whom she said that she would marry " if she had only to live with him for four months in each year."

The next lover was a pastor, who was as mercenary as herself, for he threw her over for a lady with a large

fortune. After this failure to establish herself, Suzanne became tired of seeking a husband in Switzerland and went to Paris as the companion of the rich and handsome Madame Vermoneux, the supposed mistress of Jacques Necker, the rich Swiss banker, who was established in the French capital. Once in Paris, it was not long before by her seductions Suzanne succeeded in supplanting Madame Vermoneux in the still young banker's affections, with the result that she married him in 1764.

Gibbon, whom she had last seen in 1763, returned to the side of his former love when she was at length safely married to another man. We find him writing, in 1765, to his friend Lord Sheffield, formerly Mr. Holroyd, that he had spent ten delicious days in Paris about the end of June. "She was very fond of me, and the husband particularly civil." He continues confidentially: "Could they insult me more cruelly? Ask me every evening to supper, go to bed and leave me alone with his wife—what an impertinent security!"

It was in the month of April in the following year, 1766, that was born Madame Necker's only child, Anne Louise Germaine, who was destined to become one of the most remarkable women of modern times. From the great literary talent displayed by this wonderfully precocious child from girlhood, it is difficult not to imagine but that in some, if merely spiritual, way the genius of her mother's old lover had descended through that mother's brain as a mantle upon herself. That she learnt to look upon Gibbon with admiration at an

early age is sure. Michelet informs us that owing to the praises showered upon the historian by M. Necker, Germaine was anxious, as her mother had been before her, to become Gibbon's wife. She was, however, destined to have another husband—or rather we should say two other husbands.

CHAPTER II

ANNE LOUISE GERMAINE

THE career of Jacques Necker after the birth of his daughter soon became brilliant. After being first appointed as Diplomatic Representative of Geneva at the Court of Versailles, he became Minister of Finances, in which post, while listened to for a time by the young King Louis XVI., he became the idol of the people of France.

During the years that Necker received little but praise in all directions and was one of the richest men in France he occupied a splendid hôtel or mansion, in which his wife, now a very great lady, received a large and very varied society.

The receptions of the former Suzanne Curchod were as frequent as they were magnificent, and into the brilliant society of wits, nobles, fair dames, and men of literary distinction the youthful Germaine was introduced at an extremely early age. Beloved by her father, whom she adored in turn with unlimited devotion, a freedom was permitted to the child quite unknown in the salons of Paris. She was no more than eleven when she became the object of admiration of all those who frequented her father's palatial dwelling, and, being remarkably self-possessed and full of vanity, her first endeavour was to shine, to dazzle by

her brilliance, brightness, intelligence, talent for repartee and literary aspirations. Soon she was primed in the principles of Jean Jacques Rousseau and openly expressing her devotion to that father of the French Revolution; moreover, the growing girl was steeped in the romantic sensibility of the day. While writing novels, comedies, tragedies, and a book about Rousseau, Germaine was also by the time that she was fifteen carrying on a clandestine love-affair with a middle-aged General quite devoid of moral character, with whom she exchanged a fervid correspondence.

From this time onwards her life was dominated by the passion of love—it became, indeed, a succession of ill-regulated love-affairs of varying intensity, love-affairs which were frequently ridiculous but oft-times verging on the tragic, owing to the wild and jealous fervour with which she worshipped one more or less worthless lover after another.

Ridiculous was not, however, the love which Germaine bore for her father, whom she elevated upon a pedestal almost as a god. During the period of the earlier stages of the French Revolution, in which by recommending Louis XVI. to summon the States-General Necker bore an active but blameless part, his daughter was always proud to be seen by his side upon any prominent public occasion, while subsequently, after the fallen and discredited Controller-General of Finances had fled to his magnificent Château of Coppet on the Lake of Geneva, Germaine was frequently there with him, to act as his solace and encourage his never-to-be-realised ambitions of a triumphant return to

France. While living with her father more in the relations of brother and sister than those of father and daughter, she dominated him by her advice and aided him with her powerful pen, but by no means always to his advantage. In fact, Germaine Necker loved her father as a man, admired him as a writer, venerated him as the ideal of the citizen, the philosopher, the wiseacre and statesman. "She tolerated no one who did not hold Necker as a god: virtuous and naïve folly, more touching even than ridiculous." So tells us Michelet, who also informs us that after the first fall of Necker from office, when he was recalled in triumph to preside over the Ministry of the tottering Monarchy, she appeared by his side upon the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville. Germaine was then so overcome with joy at the plaudits of the admiring Paris mob that in an excess of sentiment she fainted from sheer happiness. Of the relations between Germaine and her mother, the formerly brilliant lover of Gibbon, her numerous biographers tell us nothing beyond the fact already referred to that from her childish years she was allowed to show off and shine in that beautiful mother's salon. While governing her father by her enthusiasm, driving him forward in his revolutionary career by the *élan* and ardour of her own confidence in the principles of liberty and the good sense of the human race, for the former Suzanne Curchod, Germaine will appear to have had no more than an amiable indifference.

Germaine was aged twenty-three at the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789, and it was then under the

influence of his daughter's inspiration that Necker plunged so boldly into the hazardous paths of the measure of universal suffrage, from which resulted such momentous issues for a France so little educated to understand the power thus thrust into unaccustomed hands. Later on both the father and the daughter appeared as though seized with affright at their former revolutionary audacity, and as if inclined to draw back.

The ebullient Germaine now surrounded herself with those of the more moderate elements, such as the members of the Feuillants Club, founded in 1790 by Lafayette, Sieyès, and Larochefoucauld.

She also became an Anglo-maniac, upon nothing but hearsay evidence extolling everything English, especially the British Constitution. She still, however, continued brilliant and eloquent, and succeeded in satisfying her vanity by making people occupy themselves with her and her opinions.

Unlike her mother, Germaine Necker was not beautiful. Her face and form were both somewhat heavy and inclined to coarseness, seeming to betoken the German origin from which sprung the Necker family. She had, however, a strongly accentuated and beautiful bust and also beautiful hands, but what really redeemed her features from mediocrity were her piercing dark, almost black, eyes, burning with the passion with which her whole career shews her to have been consumed.

From an early age there was talk of getting her suitably married, a man of the plebeian origin but enormous fortune of Jacques Necker thinking that he

had a right to aspire to the ranks of the nobility to find a husband for his voluble daughter, for, indulging as was Germaine constantly in floods of eloquence, voluble is the term by which her boundless flow of conversation is best characterised.

The members of the French nobility, who were so soon after this period to lose their titles and their ancient rights, partly owing to the action of Necker himself, were not enthusiastic in coming forward to seek the hand of the young heiress. William Pitt, however, who was in France in 1783, asked Necker for his daughter, and Madame Necker supported his suit, but Germaine herself does not appear to have taken a fancy to the great Englishman.

Failing to find a French noble, Necker offered his daughter to Count Axel Fersen, the gallant Swedish noble who was the devoted lover of Queen Marie Antoinette. He, however, declined the alliance, but passed on the young lady to his friend, the Baron de Staël-Holstein. To him, after a long dickering concerning the dowry, Necker consented to give his daughter, but only after Gustavus III. of Sweden had given a definite promise to retain the Baron as Swedish Ambassador in Paris.

De Staël-Holstein was a gambler and always in debt ; he was, however, an amiable man, about seventeen years older than his bride, who, with all her unrestrained passion, never wasted any of it on her husband.

Germaine Necker was married and went to live in the Swedish Embassy in January, 1786, when she

was almost twenty years of age. The deepest feeling of the young lady's heart, as depicted by her in her novel *Delphine*, of which book the heroine is evidently herself, was a woman's craving for love. The same craving for love is evident in her later novel, *Corinne*, in which the romantic and talented heroine possesses all the accomplishments which Madame de Staël attributed to herself. In fact, so evidently was the clever Corinne founded upon her own model and personality that the name is often found applied to the author in the current literature of the day, where, when speaking of Madame de Staël, she is frequently mentioned simply as "Corinne."

Not having sought for or found love in the mere *mariage de convenance* which she had concluded with the easy, good-natured Swedish Ambassador, while waiting to bestow the whole wealth of her affections upon some other man whom she proposed to distinguish, the young bride gave full vent to the other dream of her heart. This was the desire to please, to shine among all, to become a brilliant society queen with Paris at her feet. In spite of an impulsive, abrupt manner, a careless mode of dressing, and an absence of beauty, in this she succeeded. The passionate and versatile character, the irresistible personality and intensity of the affections of the young wife of M. de Staël carried all before them in society, and men and women were soon at her feet or listening spellbound to her flowing and impromptu eloquence. Her words habitually poured forth in streams, in a kind of glorified inspiration which frequently displayed a

clear understanding on the part of the talker. Nor, in spite of the love of her own voice which distinguished Madame de Staël, was she, as might have been imagined, nothing but a mere bore, for she often possessed the charm of making others—especially some of the women—think that she was taking as much interest in their affairs as in her own. Of this fact we find evidence in the pages of various contemporary ladies. Of these, one is the Comtesse de Boigne, and another Madame de Tessé, of whom the latter remarks : " Were I Queen, I would order Madame de Staël to talk to me for ever."

Madame de Boigne, while relating in her memoirs how charmed she was by much that she found in Madame de Staël, gives also various instances of her absolute want of tact, or, to put it more plainly, downright rudeness. One such occurred at the home of the Comtesse, near Chambéry, at a dinner of thirty persons, when, narrates the writer : " Madame de Staël was by the side of the master of the house, and the Prefect, opposite to her, at my side. She asked him across the table what had become of a man whom she had known as a sub-Prefect ; he answered that the man was now a Prefect and much respected.

" ' I am very glad to hear it ; he was a good fellow. In any case,' she added carelessly, ' I have generally found that class of servant very decent.'

" I saw the Prefect turn red and pale and felt my heart in my mouth. Madame de Staël did not seem to notice that she had been rude, nor had she intended to be. I quote the fact to point out a strange anomaly

in this eminently sociable mind, namely, that she was entirely wanting in tact. Madame de Staël never considered her audience in the least when she was talking, and without the smallest intention of causing embarrassment or giving offence she would often choose subjects of conversation and expressions most disagreeable to the persons to whom she spoke."

The Comtesse de Boigne continues by giving two other occasions when Madame de Staël proved her disregard of the feelings of others. On the first of these she contrived most cruelly to embarrass Madame de Boigne herself, and on the other it was a poor lady named Madame de Caumont who was the sufferer, to the extent that she was reduced to despair. After coming to the charitable conclusion that Madame de Staël was merely carried away by her eloquence, the Comtesse adds : " Did she, then, forget her manners ? The question may be asked, and the answer is that she considered herself as a privileged person, whose genius justified indiscretions inexcusable in ordinary mortals."

The name of the Prefect who was so much insulted was M. Finot, and he was a most intellectual man. During the dinner a letter was handed to him, which after reading he put in his pocket but shewed later to Madame de Boigne. It was an order from Napoleon to the effect that Madame de Staël was to be sent back at once by the police direct to the Château of Coppet on the Lake of Geneva, which place she had, as the amiable Prefect well knew, been ordered not to leave. When Madame de Boigne begged M. Finot not to cause a disturbance in her house, he replied that he

had no intention of doing so, but added with some bitterness: "I should be sorry if she changed her opinion concerning servants of my class!"

While characterising the intellectual power of Madame de Staël as being prodigious, the Comtesse says that after a talk with her one left her entirely pleased with oneself. "The talker felt that he had been at his best, for there was kindness as well as the wish to be amused in her mode of the handling of everyone."

It is, however, evident that there was not much kindness in the arrogance with which Madame de Staël treated the inhabitants of the city of Geneva, near which was her home of Coppet to which she was banished for so long by Napoleon's order. We learn that the provincials, and especially the Genevese, were crushed beneath her disdainful indifference; "to such she did not trouble to be rude, but ignored their existence." Nevertheless, although hated by the people of Geneva, they were proud of her notoriety, and in spite of the extraordinary life that Madame de Staël led at Coppet with her lovers, of whom two or three were sometimes present at once, the people of Geneva considered it a distinguished honour to be on calling terms at Coppet.

CHAPTER III

GERMAINE'S EARLY LOVERS

DURING the period of the Revolutionary era, after M. Necker had, with his wife, fled to Switzerland, and while Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette still remained nominally on the throne, and heads of the State, Madame de Staël remained in Paris with her good-natured, tolerant husband. She was anxious to prove herself an influence in the affairs of Revolutionary France, and this in a manner she succeeded in doing, partly by her intrigues with various public men, with whom her intimacy was, however, but ephemeral.

Maurice de Talleyrand was one of her early lovers, if, indeed, a man like Talleyrand, who was habitually at the feet of every attractive woman, is worthy of the dignity of being considered in the light of lover of any one of them. Be that as it may, a considerable friendship, which endured through some of the succeeding years, was the result of her early intimacy with the brilliant political time-server, who first came into notice as Bishop of Autun, to finish his astute diplomatic career as Prince of Benevento.

Madame de Staël was, however, still heart-whole; what she was in search of was the romantic in love, and while possessed of unlimited brains, romantic

feeling was not an attribute to be expected in Talleyrand de Périgord.

In the matter of the disregard of morality, as in everything else, Germaine considered herself as a privileged person, and of this fact the world soon became aware.

Not readily finding ready-made the required hero of romance, Madame de Staël determined to make one for herself, and she was not long in discovering a man into whom she thought she could instil her own chalorous, passionate enthusiasm.

Such an one was the showy Comte Louis de Narbonne. He was a handsome young noble, a bit of a *roué*, brave, and with a fair share of intelligence, but what made him particularly remarkable in the eyes of the Parisian feminine world was the fact that he was supposed to be the fruit of an incestuous union between that dissolute monarch Louis XV. and one of his daughters.

Madame de Staël loved Narbonne, and cared little if all the world knew it. She breathed the passion of her ardent nature upon him, and thus succeeded, as she thought, in transforming the elegant *grand seigneur* into the hero whom she sought as a second self. Although of the Court, where he was distrusted, he was, however, a favourite in many of the salons. In the year 1791 France was trembling on the verge of war with an European coalition of Prussia, Austria, and other States, the coalition to be headed by Gustavus III. of Sweden. This was the moment when the credit of the young wife of the Ambassador of Gustavus in

Paris was sufficient to make of her lover, Louis de Narbonne, a Minister of War.

She had now attained the age of twenty-five, but the five years that had elapsed since her marriage had by no means brought discretion to Germaine. Madame de Staël, on the contrary, proceeded to make a public exhibition of herself by acting in open opposition to her husband's policy. When Narbonne received instructions to visit and report upon all the defences of the eastern border and north-eastern France, she calmly left Paris and drove all round the frontier with her lover.

During the tour of inspection it is evident that the young nobleman was too much taken up with gazing into his fair companion's flaming black eyes. The eyes that have been described as "*noirs et inondés de flammes, rayonnants de génie et de toutes les passions,*" were, alas! the undoing of the Minister of War. Narbonne never saw the defences at all, or, if he did, upon his return he presented such a highly-coloured report of their state of efficiency as to be absolutely fictitious.

In the beginning of the following year, when the war broke out, the mistake of having trusted to a Minister of Madame de Staël's making became apparent to the Girondist Ministry of the day, and both of the so-called Staël Ministers, Narbonne and the Foreign Minister, Delessarts, were promptly dismissed, and of these the latter was soon assassinated by the mob.

Subsequently, aided by his Germaine to escape in disguise, Louis de Narbonne left France hurriedly for England, in order to save his head, for heads were

commencing to fall freely in 1792—the year, moreover, of the terrible September massacres, although those of the King and Queen did not fall upon the guillotine until The Terror of 1793. It was upon September 2nd that Narbonne's *chère amie* herself was rescued in turn and saved from a horrible death at the hands of the bloodstained rabble that slaughtered thousands, including the Queen's great friend, the fair young Princesse de Lamballe.

Germaine had been detained at the Hôtel de Ville, when Manuel, a municipal councillor of the Commune, contrived to procure her liberty upon the plea that she was enceinte. She then hurried off to Switzerland, which she reached in safety.

It had only been by the greatest display of nerve that in the absence of her husband, who had been recalled to Sweden, the young Ambassadress had succeeded in saving Narbonne. With two other friends, Mathieu de Montmorency and Beaumetz, she had concealed him in the Embassy in the Rue du Bac when the Republican commissioners appeared to search the premises. These men were quite ignorant and uneducated, and Madame de Staël succeeded in frightening them by pointing out how heinous a crime they would commit by searching the house of the Ambassador of a friendly Power. When she told them that the frontiers of Sweden were contiguous to those of France, and that the result of the insult would be that a Swedish army would at once march over the border, the officials left the Embassy with apologies, being personally conducted to the door by the clever-

witted and self-possessed young lady who had deceived them.

She subsequently got Louis de Narbonne away to England owing to the devoted assistance of a young Hanoverian doctor named Bollmann. This young fellow had an uncle established as an English merchant in Paris, and he contrived to obtain two passports at the English Embassy, one for himself and one for Narbonne, in the name of Heisch. Boldly declaring themselves to be both Englishmen, the pair got safely to Boulogne, and thence to Dover, on August 20th, 1792.

The terrible "September massacres" had already commenced in Paris when, on the second of the month, Germaine de Staël endeavoured in turn to make her escape by driving off openly to Switzerland. She had, however, altogether misunderstood the attitude of the people when she thought that she could proceed openly through the streets in a grand coach with six horses, no matter how well she might be furnished with Swedish passports for herself and her attendants. A screaming mob of women and men seized the horses, declaring that she was making her escape with the gold of the nation. They dragged her off at a foot's pace to the Hôtel de Ville, she being threatened all the way by men with pikes. There she was nearly killed on mounting the steps by one of the howling rabble, who aimed a blow at her, whose weapon was, however, knocked from his hand. While detained for six agonised hours with her maid, the fate of the two women was deliberated on, and in the meantime they

were placed near a window whence they could see the murderers of the inmates of the prisons returning with bloody hands and arms across the Place de Grève below. At length Manuel told Madame de Staël that the Commune would allow her to go, and himself accompanied her after dark back to the Embassy. Early the next morning the Commune sent her off with only her maid in a travelling carriage, she being escorted by the famous Jacobin leader Tallien to the barriers surrounding Paris, after which she was allowed to proceed unmolested to her father's residence at Coppet, in Switzerland.

During the years succeeding her marriage until her providential escape in September, 1792, the young Madame de Staël's salon had been one of the most frequented in Paris. Although never well looked upon by the Court and scarcely recognised by Marie Antoinette, for whom she had no sympathy, the Baronne de Staël had succeeded in gathering together at her house people of all parties. Determined always to be in the eye of the world, to make herself recognised and talked about, at the age of twenty-four Germaine was already celebrated. Her book *Letters on Jean Jacques Rousseau* had made her famous, while by her agitated personality and her spirit of intrigue during the whole of the Revolutionary period until the moment of escape she had exercised a considerable influence upon public opinion and affairs in general. It was a time when women held their sway in an unprecedented manner in Paris, and among all those who were remarkable the young Swedish Ambassadress shone supreme, her

influence exceeding that of all the others. It was her delight to gather together at her house those of the opposing factions, especially those of what was called the Constitutional party—that is to say, those who wished to preserve the Royal authority, not on the old despotic lines, but with a constitution which would give the nation the necessary guarantees of being governed with justice and no longer to be ground down by King, nobility, and the powerful clergy.

To this section belonged alike Louis de Narbonne, Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, and the charming young Mathieu de Montmorency, of whom mention has been made above, who were all three of them the lovers of Madame de Staël at this period of her life.

Of them, two were married, namely, de Narbonne and Montmorency, while Talleyrand, as a member of the Church, was unable at this time to take a wife, although subsequently, by Napoleon's order, he married his fair mistress, Mrs. Grant. Nevertheless, the irresistibly charming Maurice de Talleyrand, who was skilled in the art of pleasing men and women alike, and who, according to Rivarol, could accomplish anything he pleased, had already been famous for his success with both Madame de Buffon and the Comtesse de Flahault. It was to his liaison with the latter of these two great ladies that succeeded his connection with the young wife of the Swedish Ambassador.

Rotten indeed was the condition of morality among the so-called privileged classes at this time in France. Notwithstanding the good example set by the good-natured, well-meaning King, Louis XVI., it

is doubtful if manners in Paris had improved in the least since the days of the orgies of the Regent Philippe d'Orléans or those of the lifelong debaucheries of the dissolute Louis XV.

It is only by the assumption that nobody cared how anybody else lived, while it was considered the worst possible form for a husband to be seen about in company with his own wife, that such connections as those of the youthful Baronne de Staël with her early lovers can ever have been possible.

Married to a man who had considerable talents and much that was agreeable in his nature, we find her from the first deserting him for other men, these men themselves having other ties, other unions, which it was their duty to respect.

Louis de Narbonne was married to an amiable young lady for whom one can but feel sorry. When twenty-seven years old he married Mademoiselle de Montholon, a child of only fourteen but with a very large fortune. By her this gay rake had two daughters, but she died before she had reached her nineteenth birthday. Probably it was the neglect of her *roué* of a husband that helped to kill her, since while we know that he was beloved by Germaine Necker even before her marriage to Staël, M. Norvins has put it on record in his *Mémorial* that Narbonne had also to his credit a long-standing connection with Madame de Laval, the highly-born mother of Mathieu de Montmorency Laval. Owing to this circumstance, some trouble was to arise later in connection with Benjamin Constant, the best-known lover of Madame

de Staël, but for the present we will only speak of Mathieu de Montmorency.

This young noble was from early youth a man of parts. A year younger than the precocious Germaine Necker, he was born in 1767, and after distinguishing himself in his studies, entered the army, serving at first in a regiment commanded by his father, the Vicomte de Laval. After going with Lafayette and a number of other young nobles to aid the rebellious colonists in America to fight against the British, the enthusiastic young aristocrat returned to France, not exactly imbued with Republican ideas, but anxious to aid the downtrodden classes in the country, while still preserving the Monarchy.

When, in 1789, owing to the action of Necker, the States-General of the three orders, nobles, clergy, and people, was assembled, the young officer, who was now Captain of the Guards of the King's brother, the Comte d'Artois, stood for election and was elected to represent the nobility of Montfort.

Although the youngest member of what became known as the Constituent Assembly, de Montmorency soon showed that he had plenty of grit, and on August 5th, 1789, the day after the nobles had voted to resign their titles, he strongly supported the motion to do away with all those old feudal rights by which the French peasantry had been ground down for a thousand years. He had already a few days earlier declared boldly for the Rights of Man, and in June of the following year he proposed the abolition of all armorial bearings and also of ostentatious liveries.

Mathieu de Montmorency was a blond, handsome young man of singularly distinguished appearance and manners; physically he had everything to recommend him, while by nature he was chivalrous. He was, in fact, one of the best examples of the higher class of noble of the *ancien régime*—the class whose rights, together with those of the Court, he helped to pull down. Where his morals were concerned he was, however, in his early manhood, no better than the rest. He was married early to his first cousin, the daughter of the Duc de Luynes, but, being of an ardently passionate nature, Mathieu fell, soon after his marriage, wildly in love with another cousin—or at all events a cousin by marriage—the lovely young Marquise de Laval. She encouraged Mathieu and returned his love as passionately as it was bestowed, and the pair were in the very height of their dream of felicity when a tragedy separated them for ever. While attending the Republican *fête* of the Federation, the unhappy young lady got a violent chill, as a result of which a day or two later Mathieu de Montmorency was left with only her memory. It was in all the agonies of his isolation that the young fellow turned to Germaine de Staël for sympathy, nor did he have long to wait for consolation. Concerning this, M. Gautier, a modern French writer, remarks: "Madame de Staël was not exclusive—she never was so. A man bearing one of the finest names of the French aristocracy, young, amiable, elegant, passionate, had every power over her. 'The three men whom I loved the most in my youth,' she wrote, '—Talleyrand, Narbonne, Mathieu.' Would

she have placed M. de Montmorency in the society of the two others if he had not had the same rights on her heart ? "

Mathieu remained the most faithful friend of Germaine de Staël for no less than twenty-seven years, during which he was the witness of all her vagaries—amorous, political, and literary. Frequently he sought to restrain her, to protect her from herself. But while remaining bound to her in a sweet and protective intimacy, Mathieu ceased to be Madame de Staël's lover from the time when, in the middle of 1794, he heard that his brother had been guillotined and wife and mother imprisoned. He then abjured his old unbelief and irregular life, and became a Christian and deeply religious.

CHAPTER IV

THE GATHERING AT JUNIPER HALL

FROM the day when, after undergoing a moral crisis, Mathieu de Montmorency turned to religion, he nevertheless was constantly to be found under the same roof with Madame de Staël, either in one country or another.

Germaine was at first inclined to be vexed with him for establishing the new relations between them, being apparently quite unable to understand the motives which actuated him. Finding, however, that Mathieu had quite made up his mind in future to lead a moral life, and not being anxious to resign the agreeable companionship of the handsome young noble, Madame de Staël determined to accept his decision and keep him for a friend. Had she not, for that matter, lovers enough, and could she not always obtain a new one whenever her too susceptible heart was seized with a fresh passionate fancy ?

There was already a lover in existence of whom Mathieu, after he became transformed into merely a faithful watch-dog of Germaine, by no means approved. This was a handsome Swedish Count who was named Ribbing. She had conceived for him "*une folle passion*," which crazy love was only increased after the Count had been involved in the conspiracy

which had resulted early in the year 1792 in the assassination of Gustavus III. by the hand of Ankerström. She then wrote to her friend Meister that she admired her handsome Ribbing all the more for having by his courage known how to uphold the honour of the nobility of Sweden, which was threatened by the King.

It is probable that, in any case, Germaine had no sympathy for the King of Sweden, notwithstanding that she had been in the habit of writing him lengthy epistles containing all the gossip and tittle-tattle of Paris. He had taken up strongly the attitude of defending Queen Marie Antoinette, for whom the Baron de Staël had no personal liking, he being strongly imbued, moreover, with the revolutionary feelings of the Jacobin party in Paris. This fact was plainly apparent when subsequently de Staël returned to Paris in his old post of Ambassador after the death of Gustavus III., who had recalled him in a peremptory manner to Sweden on account of his opposition to his wishes concerning support being given to Marie Antoinette.

After the enforced return of Madame de Staël to Coppet in September, 1792, it is probable that the handsome regicide, Count Ribbing, was often there to keep her company, for he had been forced to leave Sweden for Switzerland, owing to his share in the conspiracy of the nobles which had brought about the death of their monarch. None of her other lovers were, however, present, for Talleyrand and de Montmorency had, like Louis de Narbonne, taken refuge in England. Necker's house was, nevertheless, full of

French refugees, but notwithstanding that her mother was at this time ill and gradually becoming weaker, thus requiring constant attention, Germaine found her existence in Switzerland unbearably dull. She longed for a renewal of past excitements, and wrote to her husband that she "had a magnificent horror for the whole of Switzerland."

In her thirst for political prominence and longing to be in the midst of all that was going on, it is more than probable that, had it been possible for her to do so, this agitated young woman would have returned to Paris even before the end of that winter of 1792. She was compelled, however, to possess her soul in patience at Coppet until the news came, at the end of January, 1793, that the unfortunate Louis XVI. had been guillotined by his revolutionary subjects upon the twenty-first of the month. The Queen was still in prison in the Temple, and it seemed likely that her execution might follow at any time, while no one knew what might not be the fate in store for her young daughter and still younger son the Dauphin, who had been brutally torn from his mother's side.

Germaine de Staël might have formerly been opposed to the Queen, whom she knew to have disdained her, partly as the daughter of the abhorred Necker and partly on account of her turbulent and irrepressible nature and mode of life. She was, however, by this time herself the mother of two children, the last, her son Albert, having been born after her return to Coppet. Who was the father of this child it would be difficult to say, but, in spite of Germaine's irregular life,

it is probable that her first-born son, Auguste, owed his parentage to the Baron de Staël. Some time later, after the birth of her third child—Albertine—Madame de Staël's most celebrated lover, Benjamin Constant, always treated the girl as his own daughter. Being not only a mother, but a woman with a feeling heart, Germaine now grieved for the horror of the unhappy Queen's sad position. During the middle of the year 1793, she accordingly, in the vain hope of saving the life of Marie Antoinette, published a brochure entitled *Reflections upon the Prosecution of the Queen.* The pamphlet was probably written in England, for, unable longer to stand the boredom of life at Coppet, to that country the restless woman had, against her father's wishes, contrived to follow her beloved Narbonne very soon after the King's death in Paris.

To Germany, ever since the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789, there had been a steady flow of loyalist French nobles and their families, who had emigrated to save their lives and, if possible, save also their fortunes. These *émigrés,* as they were termed, were threatened with death if they did not return to France, but, as they were well aware that death would be their portion if they did return, instead of coming back to their native land the *émigrés* formed themselves into an army upon the Rhine, under the command of the Prince de Condé.

In a similar manner there had been a steady flow of French refugees to England, but, instead of being all loyalists, these were, even when of the *noblesse,* composed often of other factions opposed

to the Monarchists, such as Constitutionalists and Republicans. For the longer the French Revolution lasted, the longer did those who had all started together in the same boat continue to hunt out and proscribe each other, so that it had soon become, as it were, a case of dog eat dog.

Thus, by a strange law of retribution, those that were top to-day were down to-morrow, while on the third day those of the day before had gone down in turn, lost their heads upon the guillotine, or been hunted like wolves from their native land, happy if only they could by any stratagem reach a foreign country alive.

It thus happened that those of many classes reached England in safety, but once there, instead of combining against the oppressors of all alike who remained at the top of the tree in France, they formed into different sections and quarrelled like cat and dog between themselves. It therefore happened that while the Royalists kept together, so did the Constitutionalists keep together and form themselves into groups, and thus it came to pass that a band of these latter were to be found installed not in London, the chief haunt of the Royalists, but near Mickleham, in Surrey. They lived together in a large house named Juniper Hall, and among them were Louis de Narbonne, Maurice de Talleyrand, and Mathieu de Montmorency. Others there whose names were well known were the sentimental Lally Tollendal and Malouet, and to complete the party and become their queen arrived early in February Germaine de Staël, who, being richer than

all the others put together, paid the rent of the house. A great deal has been written about the stay of Madame de Staël and the congenial band of *émigrés* at Juniper Hall, where each one did as he liked, and there was apparently no quarrelling among the male friends of Germaine, Narbonne apparently being recognised by the others as the reigning consort.

For a time, at least, the English neighbours called, and if at first there appeared to be anything odd in the mode of procedure of the inhabitants of Juniper Hall, it was merely put down as being French. Thus some pleasant friendships were formed, everyone being especially anxious to make the acquaintance of the famous young Baronne de Staël, especially as she had just published a pamphlet, addressed to the French nation and Mr. Pitt combined, to each of whom she extolled the virtues of peace.

Among those who thus at the beginning sought acquaintance with the authoress were Fanny Burney and Mrs. Phillips, the daughters of Dr. Burney, who was the great friend of Dr. Johnson. Of these, Fanny was herself an author, having written two novels, *Evelina* and *Cecilia ;* she had, moreover, been a lady-in-waiting to the Queen of England, wife of George III.

The Burney family lived in the neighbourhood of Juniper Hall, but from the first Dr. Burney, who was, by the way, the author of a history of music, appears to have had his suspicions aroused that all was not quite as it should be in the little French colony, which at this time contained another rather doubtful lady in the person of a Madame de La Châtre, who had been

spoken of as having been " the housekeeper of M. de Talleyrand." It was, however, of Madame de Staël that Dr. Burney particularly warned his daughters to be careful, but without at first any effect. Fanny was soon teaching Germaine to write English, and they were good friends, but, being by nature a bit of a prude, she took affright and became cold in her manner when she found it difficult to understand the strange relations of friendship existing between the young Swedish Ambassadress and the Comte de Narbonne. She terminated her friendship with Germaine, but kept it up with a French General staying at Juniper Hall, named d'Arblay, whom she subsequently married.

Fanny's sister, Mrs. Phillips, did not care, however, what the world said, and remained on intimate terms with Madame de Staël.

Among those of the French colony at Juniper Hall there was one who was looked upon with suspicion by the English. While they merely smiled tolerantly at the mention of the Comte de Lally Tollendal, whose long-continued sentimental connection with the Princesse d'Henin was well known, they looked askance at Talleyrand de Périgord, who had been previously in an accredited diplomatic position in London and had not given a very favourable impression of his methods. He was now again, while actually nothing but a fugitive from France, in possession of a passport furnished by the bloody Danton, which spoke of him as having been sent over for diplomatic reasons. Talleyrand was, however, unable to impose upon Lord Grenville, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, when he offered to place

himself at the disposal of the English Government for any information required concerning French affairs, and was simply ignored.

By the people living in the neighbourhood of Juniper Hall, Talleyrand was looked upon as probably a spy for one or two parties at the same time. While having escaped to England with a passport from Danton, who was supposed to have ordered the "September massacres," the wily ex-Bishop of Autun was strongly suspected of being in the pay of the Royalist party as their secret agent. At the same time he was living and hobnobbing with a party of French *émigrés* who were neither Dantonists nor even openly Republicans, but who called themselves Constitutionalists. The Royalists in England, however, did not trust Talleyrand at all, but called him a renegade in their midst. When the long-spun-out career of Talleyrand is looked into, even casually, it must be owned that those who suspected him were justified. Madame de Staël, his one-time mistress, and who said that she loved him, may possibly have been as sharp as himself and have known the real truth about Talleyrand at this time, but no one else did or could; for his motto was ever that of the famous vicar of Bray. "For whatsoever king shall reign, I'll still be the vicar of Bray, sirs," might well have applied to Talleyrand, who from administration to administration and under many successive rulers of France was most frequently to be found in one of the most leading positions in the State.

After about four months at Mickleham, Germaine

de Staël left England and returned to Coppet. There she awaited with impatience those whom she had left behind her at Juniper Hall, and none was more anxiously awaited than Maurice de Talleyrand. He never came, greatly to her disappointment; for having received a peremptory order to leave England, and his life being unsafe on the Continent, the brilliant Maurice was glad to find a ship to take him to America.

CHAPTER V

BENJAMIN AND MADAME DE CHARRIÈRE

It was not long after the return of Madame de Staël to Coppet from England, and after she had been rejoined by her husband, who came from Sweden, before the arrival of tragic news. This was no less than that of the cruel murder of Marie Antoinette in Paris, she having followed her husband to the guillotine on October 16th, 1793.

The cry of Germaine to spare the Queen's life had been but as the voice of one crying in the wilderness; she bitterly realised that her words had been entirely without influence in the ears of Jacobin Paris and the savage party of the Mountain in the National Convention, many of whose members were known to her personally. Her disappointment was great, and for a time her sympathetic heart appeared to be crushed by the blow, which came as a shock to the whole of Europe outside France. Quite unable to do any literary work, Madame de Staël sought fresh distractions in the society of such friends as arrived at Coppet, and devoted herself, by a series of cunning devices and employment of false passports, to procuring the means of flight from France of various persons of both sexes who were still there in daily peril of their lives. In

these efforts Germaine was eminently successful, and various ladies and gentlemen saved their heads in consequence. Some of these people filtered through to Coppet from time to time, where even if Royalists, and thus opposed to the Republican views of Madame de Staël and her father, they found a kindly welcome, which kindness in various instances they merely rewarded by making themselves intensely disagreeable.

The Château of Coppet, with its numerous occupants, must at times have resembled a rabbit-warren, but unless its roof happened to shelter any of her particular friends at the time being, its peaceful atmosphere, so conducive to quiet reflection and pleasing to others, by no means suited the disposition of Necker's daughter. This fact distressed her mother who, although in failing health, appeared not to regret in the least her past glories in France, while the former powerful Minister, her husband, also after a time seems to have been able to resign himself to the altered conditions of his life. Madame Necker wrote regretfully to a friend concerning this, that although her husband appeared much happier in his retirement than he had ever been during his worldly honours, her daughter, on the contrary, seemed so occupied with outward events and with the joys and distractions of society that she, her mother, no longer could contribute to her happiness.

The poor mother, indeed, got but little pleasure out of her headstrong daughter's life. Her share had been completed when in her youth she had furnished

Germaine with every means of attaining an excellent education, while allowing her at the same time to meet in her childhood's days all the prominent people in society in her salon. From that time Madame Necker had been relegated to the background. Unlike her daughter, who held the so-called philosophical views of the day, she was inclined to religious ideas; she remained intensely attached to her husband, and during her last years passed at Coppet indulged her literary inclinations so far as to write a book, which was chiefly remarkable for the strong attitude against divorce maintained throughout its pages. During the year 1794 Madame Necker died; but before departing from this life she left extraordinary instructions as to the disposition of her remains after death. She asked M. Necker to have her body immersed in some chemical fluid and then placed in a vault in the Park. Her face, however, was to remain visible, being covered with a pane of glass, and she begged her husband to keep the key of the vault so as to be able to come frequently to look upon her features for so long as he lived, and when he died to be buried in the vault by her side.

The Château of Coppet, in which Madame de Staël passed so many of her days, and where both her father and her mother died, was a very old building, having been built as long ago as the year 1257, when the then reigning Count of Savoy seized the Swiss Canton de Vaud. It was a big building enclosing a courtyard, to enter which was an ancient arched gateway, surmounted by two towers and with very thick walls.

The Château was built away from the Lake of Geneva and was surrounded by the tall trees of the Park. The lake, however, as well as the distant city of Geneva, could be seen from an upper storey, as also could a fine panorama of the mountains of Savoy. There was a long gallery in the Château, which was used by Jacques Necker for his study, and later by Germaine de Staël and her friends for the performance of amateur theatricals, but from this gallery nothing could be seen except a number of beautiful plane-trees, which concealed from sight a picturesque little village. This ancient castellated building with all the surrounding lands constituted a barony, which had passed through the hands of several aristocratic families of high rank. Eventually it came into the possession of the Scotch banker Thelusson, who sold it to Necker, whose partner he was in the bank in Paris.

The Canton de Vaud, of which Lausanne is the capital, was at that time feudally subject to the Canton of Berne, the Supreme Council of the Government of which claimed the payment of about 170,000 francs from M. Necker when he bought the barony of Coppet, the sum which he paid to Mr. Thelusson for the house and grounds being half a million francs.

One reason why the residence at Coppet was more agreeable to Madame Necker than to her daughter is easy to understand. When there, the former love of Edward Gibbon was practically on her native soil, as at only an hour's distance lay the village of Crassy, where the great historian had in his young days been

wont to go and stay with the fair Suzanne Curchod in her father's parsonage. Germaine de Staël had no such tender recollections. She had been born not in Switzerland but Paris, and always liked to consider herself not Swiss but French.

It was but a few months after the death of her mother at Coppet in May, 1794, that there came upon the scene the man with whom Germaine's life was to be linked for years in a series of passionate incidents frequently interspersed with frenzied paroxysms of jealous rage. This was Benjamin Constant de Rebecque, of whom she wrote at one time, just after he had fought a duel : " He is the man in the world whom I love the best, the man to whom I cling by every fibre that remains to me of life." Many hundreds, indeed thousands, of pages must have been written concerning Germaine and her Benjamin, not only by contemporaries but by herself in letters to her friends, and above all by Constant himself in his *Journal Intime.*

This diary, being written for his own eye alone, is absolutely reliable as a history of the man's life, since, the better to prevent it being understood by anyone, he wrote it in the Greek character. Benjamin was undoubtedly one of the most clever men of his day ; he was a publicist, a romance-writer, and a politician and so much mixed up was he with Madame de Staël in the public eye in the troubled time of the Directory in France as to be considered even by Napoleon as her *alter ego.*

More frequently than not, indeed, despite his own

powers of initiative, Benjamin Constant was merely the puppet of whom Germaine pulled the strings. She was too strong for him, and therefore forced him at times to act foolishly in political matters merely to gratify her own whims or spite. If eventually she incurred Napoleon's undying hatred and persecution, it was in a great measure owing to her own fault in insisting upon Benjamin making a speech in the "Tribunat," attacking the great First Consul at the very time that he owed him nothing but gratitude and support for having just appointed him to that important body.

Benjamin Constant was a young man of about Germaine's own age, that is to say, between twenty-seven and twenty-eight, when he first came into the stormy life of the woman who before a couple of years had elapsed was thinking seriously of divorcing her husband to definitely unite her existence to his. As it happened, the Baron de Staël spared her the trouble, since he it was who at length procured a divorce from her, although they became again united for a short time before her husband's death in May, 1802. She did not, however, even then marry Constant, who formed another matrimonial connection—his second—while at the same time, owing to her insistence, continuing his *liaison* with Madame de Staël, and, from fear of his mistress, forcing his wife to keep herself in the background.

Benjamin Constant was a Swiss by birth, being born at Lausanne, the son of noble parents, Colonel Juste de Constant de Rebecque and Henriette de

Chandieu, who died at his birth. His father, who was a clever man, was in the Dutch Service, and, being unable to look after his motherless boy, left him in the hands of his grandmother and his aunt, the Comtesse de Nassau, who spoiled the child thoroughly.

To try to understand properly the extraordinary personality of Benjamin, before condemning him outright as nothing but a brilliantly clever scamp, one must take into consideration his birth and upbringing. He had practically no country, had no religious teaching and no family life, but was left to float about from the tender age of seven, when his father placed him in the charge of a tutor in Holland. His precocity was from the first extraordinary, and quite on a par with that of Germaine Necker at a similar age. By the age of twelve he was already a poet, and likewise passionately devoted to gambling games at cards, but two years before that time he had astonished his grandmother by the following letter: "I sometimes see here a young English girl of my age, whom I prefer to Cicero and Seneca, and who teaches me Ovid, whom she has never read or heard speak of, but I find him entirely in her eyes." It was evidently Ovid's book on the art of loving to which the boy here referred, but it was an art in which he was to receive further instruction before long from various other feminine eyes, presumably not so innocent as those of the young English girl.

We must pass over Benjamin's life at Edinburgh and Oxford, and the early dissipations in Paris, which

we afterwards find him regretting as "a crazy waste of time, money, and health," but allusion must be made to the intellectual woman of the world and distinguished authoress who made of him her lover. This was Madame de Charrière, a Dutch lady of noble birth, who was forty-seven years of age and already long married when she gathered the twenty-year-old Benjamin into her fold at her country-house of Colombier near Neufchâtel, in Switzerland. From the still handsome woman Benjamin Constant learnt other things beside the art of love. Notwithstanding the fact that after a two months' stay at Colombier the lady and the lover exchanged affectionate letters early every day from one bedroom to another, it is very evident that the brilliant woman of letters also developed along other lines the already very clever brains of the young Chamberlain at the Court of Brunswick. For such, by this time, Benjamin Constant had become, his father having obtained him the Court appointment, from which he was absent on leave when accident took him to the house—and arms—of Madame de Charrière.

So little was the delicacy of the times that the lady did not hesitate to write later intimate and interesting anecdotes concerning Benjamin in a book that was published. Later Constant returned to visit Madame de Charrière, but after a long period of affectionate and tender epistles being interchanged between the pair, Benjamin eventually made of the sentimental Isabelle Agnès merely the confidante of his subsequent adventures with the fair sex, of his scheme for settling

in America, or his project of writing a history of Civilisation in Greece.

At the age of twenty-two Benjamin married a lady of honour of the Duchess of Brunswick. She was the Baroness Wilhelmina von Cram, and not pretty !

CHAPTER VI

BENJAMIN AND MADAME DE STAËL

BENJAMIN had been to Colombier on a visit to Madame de Charrière, and was still vibrating under the influence of the intellectual charm of that lady when he first met Madame de Staël. He had not as yet divorced his wife in Brunswick, but was about to do so when he proceeded to Lausanne, which was not so far from Colombier, with the intention of there seeking out the brilliant young lady about whom he had heard so much.

Apparently he made the acquaintance of Germaine de Staël without the formality of an introduction. He met her driving along the road, stopped her carriage, spoke to her, and she herself seems to have done the rest, since she took him up in her carriage and after the drive took him back with her to her residence.

By this time Narbonne had become one of the inmates of her Château. After infinite difficulties and dangers, the showy Comte Louis had lately arrived from England with an English passport. In spite of considerable obstacles being placed in his way by the Bernese authorities, he had successfully contrived to gain access to the Canton de Vaud, and had taken up his abode at Mézery, near Lausanne, where Madame de

Staël was living for the summer, as was also Mathieu de Montmorency.

No sooner had Benjamin arrived upon the scene than he commenced to pay ardent court to Germaine. He paid her nightly visits, which at first she compelled him to terminate when the hands of his watch pointed to the hour of twelve. In vain he begged to be allowed to stay later, the lady was inexorable. One night in his rage he dashed his watch to the ground and smashed it, but he had to go all the same. A day or two subsequently we find, however, a triumphant entry in his diary: "I have no watch! I no longer require one!"

The success of Benjamin does not seem to have particularly annoyed Comte Louis de Narbonne, but it intensely irritated poor Mathieu, who grieved greatly to see his dear friend gradually falling under the spell of one whom he considered as a mere adventurer. Above all, he would, if he could, have spared Germaine de Staël any more of the acute heart-pangs which he feared her ardent nature might entail upon her in the future. We can see all Mathieu's hopes and fears expressed in his own words, in the numerous letters that he wrote at this time to Germaine's charming and beautiful cousin by marriage, Madame Necker de Saussure. While having evidently a blameless if somewhat sentimental affection for this admirable young lady, de Montmorency had formed with her a kind of pact of union to protect Madame de Staël against herself—her own passions. It proved perfectly useless, but formed a capital excuse for a very pleasant

and intimate correspondence between two interesting young people of opposite sexes between whom there existed, what was so rare at that date, an innocent affection. Alas! it was greatly owing to Mathieu's own mother that the *dénouement* so greatly feared by him became eventually *un fait accompli*, with the result that it became a matter of absolute indifference to Benjamin Constant what might be the hour by day or night!

Madame de Montmorency Laval had been among those saved from the prisons of France and a certain death owing to the exertions of Madame de Staël. She arrived at Lausanne and then at Mézery, to find Narbonne installed on the premises. With him in the years gone by there had been many love-passages, which she had never forgotten. The consequence was that, instead of showing any gratitude to Germaine for having saved her from the guillotine, she was inwardly furious, and anxious only to be able to do anything to separate her for ever from the captivating Comte Louis. Fate played into the hands of Madame de Laval when it brought Benjamin Constant upon the scene. For a time her innocent son Mathieu was at a loss to understand how it was that his mother was upon such intimate terms with one whom he considered as nothing but a most undesirable interloper. The fact was that, eaten up by jealousy, Madame de Laval had conceived a plan whereby to detach Germaine from Comte Louis, while throwing her into the arms of Benjamin. She it was who contrived all the secret meetings between Constant and Madame de Staël

while likewise urging him on in his suit, and at the same time constantly praising him and painting him in the warmest colours to Germaine.

When at last poor Mathieu awoke to the facts of the situation and understood his mother's machiavellian wiles it was too late, and it was never to matter more to Constant whether he possessed a watch or no.

The Baron de Staël had returned to Paris. In Sweden the new ruler was the brother of the late King, the Duke of Södermanland, who was Regent during the minority of his young nephew Gustavus IV. Of all the countries in Europe, Sweden was at this time the only one remaining on terms of friendship with the bloodstained Government of the French Republic. For the price of his friendship the Regent was anxious to extract a substantial subsidy from the National Convention, and for this reason it was that Madame de Staël's husband had been sent back to Paris to negotiate. There, although not at first re-appointed as Ambassador, he was able to assume a semi-official position and to take possession once more of his old Embassy, whence his wife had been forced to fly in September, 1792. Once he was there, his wife longed to follow to Paris and to plunge once more into the fray of party politics. She had, however, many enemies in Paris, where she was looked upon as an object of suspicion as being known to consort with members not only of the out-of-date Constitutionalist party, but also with nobles who were suspected of favouring a restitution of the Bourbons and monarchical principles in France. There were very good grounds for the distrust

with which the irrepressible Germaine was viewed, for what, indeed, were her friends at Mézery but nobles of the old *régime*, whose inclinations were certainly rather in favour of monarchical than of the republican institutions by which they remained banished from France?

Her new friend, Benjamin Constant, had, however, no black mark against him; he was not a French aristocrat, had never been mixed up in any of the preceding political crises, and possessed indeed the merit of being absolutely unknown. Benjamin was, however, as full of ambition as Germaine. He hoped that he might be able to do something in Paris—make a name somehow, obtain some lucrative post. His inclinations were, moreover, in favour of the Republic to which Madame de Staël was perfectly ready to openly express her devotion, if only by that means she were permitted once more to reside in that beloved Paris, existence away from which she considered as unbearable exile.

Thus she and her new lover egged each other on, until no persuasions on the part of Mathieu and the others of her clique in Switzerland could restrain her. It happened accordingly that, leaving her old associates behind, Germaine de Staël, accompanied only by her Benjamin, gaily took the route for Paris on May 15th, 1795. Great was the anxiety of those she left, for reports of disturbances accompanied by some fresh bloodshed reached their ears almost before the couple had crossed the French frontier. The adventurous Germaine was not, however, to be deterred

by the reports of recent happenings which met her on her way, but continued her journey and reached her old home in Paris in triumph. The welcome which she met with was not, however, all that she could have wished, for on the last day of May a most violent attack was made upon Madame de Staël in a semi-political journal which seemed very well acquainted with her recent movements. Fearing to be put out of Paris again, Germaine now committed what was looked upon as an act of apostasy by all the friends whom she had left behind her in Switzerland.

The *Political, National and Foreign News* had accused her of having had a last political meeting with her friends, the detested *émigrés*, at a place called Yverdun. As a reply, Madame de Staël rushed into print, and practically went back upon her Constitutional friends by a long letter declaring that the Republican Government of the day alone was what was dear to her heart, vowing, moreover, that it was " the only form of government founded on the sacred bases of justice and humanity."

Her letter had the result that she desired, since she was not exiled from the capital, but in Switzerland the faithful Mathieu had an uphill game to play when, both by letter and word of mouth, he sought to defend the apostate from all those whom she had bitterly offended.

So greatly upset was Mathieu by this defection that he wrote to his fair friend Germaine's cousin as follows : " I beg you on my knees to explain to me this inconceivable letter ! What a sad influence is that of

Paris, and likewise probably that of Benjamin. I have an additional duty to go there to fulfil: it is to fight the impulses of my friend towards such miserable objects."

Poor Mathieu! he could not stand any longer absence from the side of the woman whom he wanted to protect against herself, and soon afterwards we find him too back in Paris, after he had succeeded, with some difficulty, in obtaining a passport for his return. This passport was made out in a Swedish name, and by its use Mathieu de Montmorency arrived in the capital at a critical moment. There was a Royalist reaction in full swing, and Madame de Staël, plunging deep into the fray, was doing her best to reconcile all parties. Her endeavour to join both Royalists and Constitutionalists to Republicans was an utter failure with all alike. When her husband's Embassy had been filled by her with returned *émigrés*, the agitating woman was first violently denounced in the National Convention and then formally exiled from Paris.

Through her Swedish husband's efforts the decree of exile was soon cancelled, but she could not remain in Paris and was glad to take refuge with Mathieu, who had not arrived a day too soon. He now took his too-impulsive friend to a country house that he possessed at Saint-Gratien, where she stayed for a time in quiet, while writing a political pamphlet entitled *Reflections upon Internal Peace* This publication did Madame de Staël no good, and she found herself continually exposed to the most disagreeable form of police surveillance.

Unable to stand the uncomfortable position in

which she found herself, even the stout heart of Madame de Staël gave way, with the result that, within two months of the date of the establishment of the Government of the Directory in France, she turned her back upon Paris and practically fled once more to Switzerland.

Germaine left Saint-Gratien at the end of December, 1795; left also her Benjamin, who was vigorously place-hunting while continuing to write his great book upon all religions, of which Madame de Charrière has informed us he made the commencements upon the backs of playing-cards when staying with her at Colombier. This book it took Constant no less than eleven years to complete.

The safety of Mathieu de Montmorency had in the meantime become endangered by his friendship for Madame de Staël.

The newly-installed Directory, consisting of five Directors all selected for having been among those who had voted for the King's death, wished to show its power, to frighten its enemies, or possible enemies. Mathieu was arrested, dragged before a Juge de Paix, and put into prison. It was, however, fortunately for him, recognised that he had kept himself perfectly quiet—interfered in no political matters. His action in having harboured Madame de Staël was condoned and he was set at liberty.

That lady had in the meantime been joined by Benjamin Constant, and together they had gone to Sweden.

CHAPTER VII

GERMAINE AND THE BARON DE STAËL

It was almost impossible to keep Germaine de Staël long from Paris, no matter what were the dangers or disagreeables awaiting her there. These were, however, entirely of her own creating ; could she have only made up her mind to be quiet she would not have been continually receiving orders of exile, as she termed them, from the Directory. Quiet, however, did not at all suit the restless, active young lady, who felt that she might as well die if not continually figuring at the same time as the attractive hostess in a crowded salon and the chief mover in some political combination. With some of the five members of the Directory she was on good terms, and notably so with the handsome *ci-devant* noble, General Barras.

Barras was the lover of Madame Josephine de Beauharnais, and the man to whom was due the early advancement of his *protégé*, the young Napoleon Bonaparte, who married Josephine at a later date.

To Barras' friendship and protection Germaine owed much, for no matter if most of the Directors detested and feared Madame de Staël, he remained her firm friend, and Barras was the leading and most powerful figure in the Directory. Ever faithful to her

old friends who were out of pocket or out of employment, Germaine never hesitated to harry Barras on their behalf. Therefore it was through him eventually that she managed to obtain for Talleyrand a position which placed him once more in the highest office and the lap of fortune. After a year or two's residence in America, where he made himself and the French name very unpopular by intriguing with Jefferson against Washington, Talleyrand contrived to get back to Europe after the guillotining of that arch-fiend Robespierre in 1794. He landed in Holland, where he found many old acquaintances of both sexes, including his former love the Comtesse de Flahaut, but he was by no means inclined for long to " waste his sweetness on the desert air " among the other *émigrés*. The terms of the passport given him by the now long since guillotined Danton were insisted upon by him in Paris, probably by the agency of Madame de Staël, with the result that the decree against him of being proscribed as an *émigré* was at length rescinded, and he was allowed to return to France. There he found himself free, but starving. In despair, deprived of all resources, he vowed that he would kill himself unless he could obtain a place under the Directory. Germaine thought it would be a pity if her former lover should blow out his precious brains with a pistol, as they might be devoted to more useful purposes. Accordingly she put herself "*en quatre*" on Talleyrand's behalf, with the successful result that he was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs through her influence.

Once back with his foot in the stirrup, the beloved Maurice of Germaine was soon riding the horse, becoming the most influential member of the Government of the Directory and making of Barras little more than a tool.

Notwithstanding Talleyrand's early pre-eminence and the power of Barras, it was not until the end of 1796 that the presence of Madame de Staël was again tolerated in France, and then she was ordered not to come nearer to Paris than "*its environs.*"

Fortunately, Benjamin Constant possessed by this time a country house fifteen leagues from the capital, at Hérivaux. He flew to Coppet and brought his *chère amie* back with him to this retreat. She had utilised her time during her latest residence at Coppet by writing her work named *On the Influence of the Passions on the Happiness of Individuals and Nations.*

From the effect of the book with this terribly lengthy title she had expected much—to influence public opinion in her favour being her principal object in its publication.

Everybody read the new work by the so-well-known authoress, and many were greatly struck by the charm of expression, by the penetrating analysis of all the revolutionary passions, such as the fury of crime, ambition, party spirit, and the love of glory. It was a remarkable epitome of the terrible epoch through which France had been passing, and its pages struck home.

Further, the book was meant to be also an exponent of the mind and nature of the writer, to give a picture

of her melancholy, passionate soul. Being anxious to provoke sympathy with her in her sorrows, the author stated that she had wished to give a real idea of her life, habits, and the nature of her character.

Germaine had counted upon the literary efforts of her friend, the writer Rœderer, and also on the pen of Benjamin, to write up the book and prepare public opinion in Paris before she left Coppet, and thus to ensure its favourable reception, and through its success to impose a permission for herself to return.

There is no doubt that in this instance the manœuvres of Madame de Staël were successful, but she was, nevertheless, opposed at the very moment of her success by a serious set-back. This concerned her husband, who, owing to diplomatic relations with Sweden having been stretched almost to breaking-point, had been ordered to absent himself from Paris—to leave the Embassy and France.

Obeying his instructions to take a holiday, the Baron de Staël had suddenly made his appearance in Switzerland, when he informed his wife that he intended to return to Sweden and, further, to take her off with him to live upon his estates. When his wife refused he began to be insistent, whereupon it was that, to the horror of Mathieu de Montmorency, Madame de Staël commenced to talk of procuring a divorce in order that she might marry her Benjamin.

The consternation of Mathieu was great indeed. He had lately arrived at the stage of having recognised Benjamin, to the extent of looking upon him as a

necessary evil, calculated to keep Germaine's mind occupied so that she might no longer dwell upon one whom he considered as being by far the most dangerous element in her life. This was the Swedish Count Ribbing; but Ribbing had recently gone off to America, greatly to the relief of mind not only of Mathieu but of Germaine's father, M. Necker.

That faithful friend, de Montmorency, had been deceived by Madame de Staël concerning Benjamin, she causing him to think that she found in him merely the distraction of the moment. Thus he had believed that it was owing to a spirit of coquetry, an admiration for Benjamin's intellectual capabilities, that Germaine had taken the man up for a time as a mere relief from her boredom, her melancholy.

But now, horror! she was talking of divorcing Staël, of marrying the detested red-haired adventurer! This, then, was a real passion, with all its possible storms ahead—the very kind of thing from which the honest Mathieu had longed to preserve his friend; a passion, too, for such a man, one whose irritating mannerisms and political ideas appalled him—a mere revolutionary! Had it been as a result of a deep-rooted passion for an aristocrat of refined manners, like a Narbonne, a Talleyrand, or even himself, that Germaine de Staël had thought of thus letting herself go, Mathieu would not have been so appalled. But for a Benjamin Constant! What was to be done? In his despair, poor Mathieu sat down and poured out his woes on paper in many pages to his amiable confidante, Madame Necker de Saussure.

In all of the outcry that he makes, it is worthy of note that never does the pious Mathieu let fall one single word of pity or sympathy for that so oft-deceived husband, the Baron Eric-Magnus de Staël-Holstein.

Nor when, later, it is the Baron himself who is thinking of removing the millstone from round his neck does Mathieu think of anyone's feelings save those of the woman causing all the trouble. He then writes that he will "see the man," to find out if anything can be done to save Madame de Staël from the pain of open scandal! Surely, however, there was much to be said on behalf of the deeply-wronged M. de Staël. He was by no means a nonentity. A man of good birth and distinguished appearance, he had had a considerable success in his earlier years at Versailles and Paris. The lovely Queen Marie Antoinette allowed her smiles to fall upon him; indeed, she took the greatest interest in the distinguished Swede. So did various great ladies of the highest rank, only they committed themselves deeper than the Queen. Among de Staël's friends were to be reckoned such fashionable ladies as the Duchesse de Luxembourg, the Marquise de Boufflers, and the Comtesse de La Marck. Through their good offices and those of the Queen it was that the young diplomat became first Minister Plenipotentiary and then Ambassador Extraordinary at the Court of France. The Queen herself took an interest in finding a suitable wife for the generous Swedish noble, who made such a good figure at the Court. He was, it is true, open-handed to a fault, but who, then,

so suitable for him as a mate as the daughter of the exceedingly rich, if bourgeois, Necker ?

Behold him, then, after long and calculating negotiations on the part of her father, duly provided with that already adulated and very self-satisfied young lady, the daughter of the great Swiss banker. Germaine was, it will be admitted, a difficult girl to marry. Already spoilt to excess, she wished for everything and sought to give nothing in return except in the instances where her passions were concerned. Unfortunately, in the case of the man whom she accepted as her husband in order that she might be able the better to shine under his name, her passions had nothing to do with the case. He had a title, a grand and honourable position, a Swedish Embassy wherein she might display her talents. There her husband might be permitted to see her shine—that was enough for him ! He might also, if he chose to take the trouble, observe the smiles and coquetries, the display of wits with which she sought to lure other men to her side—that did not trouble her. He brought the title, she brought the money : what else was there to worry about ? Why talk of such things as love—as fidelity ?—there was nothing else to think of.

Unfortunately for the Baron de Staël, he did think of other things. He thought from the first that he loved his wife ; thought, moreover, that he suffered deeply from her infidelities, which dishonoured his name. While himself ever faithful, he suffered at the hands of Germaine in other ways. She showed plainly

that she did not love him, and treated him to a haughty disdain, so that, while tied to a distinguished wife, the sole comfort that he got from her was to be allowed to figure in her train as one of her humble adorers. What wonder is it if, in need of distraction, and having none in any liaison with any other woman, he took to the gaming-table and played highly as a means of such distraction ?

Putting to one side all questions of love and fidelity, the diplomatic functions of the Baron de Staël were often seriously interfered with owing to the political tricks of his wife, who was well known to hold views concerning French affairs quite at variance with his own. To possess such a wife, one constantly apt to come backwards and forwards from Switzerland to Paris like a whirlwind, was a great disadvantage to the Baron in the difficult part that he had to play in order to make the mutual interests of France and Sweden run smoothly. The unfortunate man had, however, to put up with those comings and goings to Paris on the part of his wife under the Directory, which was constantly sending her away for her intrigues, as he had later under the Consulate of which Bonaparte was the head. In the year 1798, when Madame de Staël was again exiled, M. de Staël had after infinite difficulty reconquered the position of Swedish Ambassador, of which he had been deprived. He then was troubled by one constant, ever-present fear. This was that Madame de Staël would suddenly reappear from Coppet to trouble his newly-found security. But he had borne enough, and was determined what to do. If

she came to disturb him again he would demand a divorce.

We find Mathieu very anxious on this point at this time. He, however, warned Germaine, who herself understood that her husband had reached the limit, and she accordingly remained quiet.

CHAPTER VIII

MADAME DE STAËL MEETS NAPOLEON

It was an unfortunate circumstance in Madame de Staël's life that from the commencement of her married existence she elected to treat her husband as though he were a man of no account. Had she, instead of disregarding him as not worthy of consideration, but given him a little of the devotion which she knew so well how to bestow upon others, they might have led together an agreeable, happy existence, and yet one which would not in any way have militated against her making herself remarkable, whether in politics or in literature. One notoriety, it is true, would have been denied to her, that of a woman with a palpitating, oversensitive heart, ever allowing herself to be led by the violence of her passions from one folly to another. But would not she have been just as well able to write a *Delphine* or a *Corinne*, to portray herself in the colours in which she wished to appear, had she never given to Benjamin Constant the opportunity of painting her as he had actually found her in Ellenore, the heroine of his romance *Adolphe?* The wild quarrels, the tearing of the heart-strings to tatters of that book, made painful reading, but they might as well have been extracts from Constant's *Journal Intime*, since they represent the actual scenes of terrible

discord and passionate reconciliation which he so often describes as taking place between himself and Germaine de Staël.

To return to this lady and her husband. Seeing that his wife accorded him none of the usual marital rights, it is satisfactory to learn that his father-in-law paid M. de Staël's debts from time to time.

But neither this fact nor the efforts of M. Necker were availing to prevent the Baron from procuring a separation from his wife in the year 1798.

Madame de Staël then did her utmost to induce him to return to Sweden, while M. Necker seconded his daughter's efforts by sending his son-in-law the sum of 18,000 francs to defray the expenses of the journey. This, however, he continued no further than Holland, when for some reason he returned to Paris—to his wife's consternation. He was now in great poverty, his diplomatic functions having once more ceased. A little later we find Napoleon sending his brother Joseph Bonaparte to remonstrate with Madame de Staël upon the scandal of a rich woman like her leaving her distinguished husband in a destitute condition. For upon the Baron de Staël having very properly refused to allow his openly immoral wife once more to claim the shelter of his roof, Germaine had procured an order of "separation of goods" from the Paris Courts.

The remonstrance of Napoleon was, however, not without avail, as M. Necker came once more to the rescue and made the Baron an allowance. Eventually, when she learned that the Baron was very ill, Germaine

took pity on her husband's condition, sold off all his furniture and valuable objects, and started off with him to Coppet. He deserved this recognition at her hands. The last occasion upon which he had stayed with his wife at Coppet had been when she gave birth to her daughter Albertine. Then Mathieu, who had also hurried to Coppet to be with his friend in her trouble, wrote that the behaviour of the Baron had not been expansive, but absolutely correct. When it is to be remembered that Benjamin Constant always treated Albertine as his own daughter, it says a good deal for the deceived husband that he was able to control his feelings so well as to appear " correct " when the child made its appearance in the world.

The Baron de Staël did not live to reach Coppet once more, but expired suddenly when on the journey, at a place called Poligny. The sad—or joyful—event which made of Madame de Staël a widow did not take place until May 5th, 1802, previous to which date various events had taken place in Paris to bring to the fore the man of destiny with whom Germaine was to become involved in a struggle of many years' duration.

The first of these memorable occurrences dates back to the year 1795, when took place the uprising of the 13th Vendemaire of the year IV. in the Republican calendar —October 5th according to the Christian era. This date is celebrated in the history of the Revolution from the part taken by the young Corsican artillery officer, Napoleon Bonaparte, who had previously been heard of in connection with the good services he had rendered at the Siege of Toulon.

Upon the 13th Vendemaire, the Paris Sections, worked upon by Royalist reactionaries, rose in great strength to attack the National Convention sitting in the Palace of the Tuileries. All seemed lost for the Republican Government, when Barras called upon his young *protégé* for aid. With the small force at his disposal, the Corsican took the responsibility of firing with cannon upon the insurgent mob. This was the "historic whiff of grapeshot" which saved the Republic.

The Government of the Directory was formed three weeks after the successful quelling of this revolt, when the grateful Directors, of whom Barras was one, soon conferred a post of high command upon the brave and capable officer to whom they owed their salvation.

Napoleon Bonaparte, only twenty-six years of age, was appointed General in Command of the Army of Italy, over the heads of many of his seniors. He proceeded to Italy and to Austria, and the world was soon ringing with his wonderful feats of arms, by which he completely eclipsed the Generals in command of the Republican armies in the field in other parts of Europe. With his victorious army behind him to back him up, young Bonaparte soon found himself in the position to be able to disregard the instructions of the Directory, of which he apparently considered himself more as the master than the servant.

In the meantime that Directory was in difficulties from internal dissensions. From the machinations of the Royalists and the Moderates in the two Assemblies under the Directors, it seemed as if the Jacobin, which

was the ruling and Republican, element, would be overturned.

The Moderates were only anxious for a reputable form of Government, but they were very unpopular with the military element in the nation. Bonaparte was appealed to for help by three of the Directors, when, being unable to come himself, he sent General Augereau to their aid. Early on the morning of September 4th, 1797, Paris awoke surprised to find the city full of soldiers, who had marched in in the night. The Assemblies were surrounded, and all who were obnoxious to the Republican party, including two of the Directors, were arrested or proscribed. This was the famous *coup d'état* of the 18th Fructidor, and all those who were in the secret and on the successful side were spoken of later as "Fructidoreans." Among those sympathisers who knew in advance what was going to take place on the 18th Fructidor was Madame de Staël. So barbarous and cruel, however, were the methods adopted on the following day towards all those of the overthrown Royalist and Moderate parties, that the friends of that lady, to shield her name, declared that Madame de Staël belonged to the 18th, but not to the 19th Fructidor.

From the effects of Fructidor some of Germaine's former friends suffered banishment to the terrible climate of Guiana, while Mathieu de Montmorency and others whom she had warned in time made good their escape to Switzerland. Forty-two newspaper editors were, however, deported or imprisoned.

It was hardly a month later than this *coup d'état*

that the youthful General Bonaparte, acting as though he were an independent king and conqueror, imposed upon defeated Austria a crushing treaty of peace. By this Treaty of Campo Formio, Belgium and the Ionian Islands were ceded to France, while Austria was also compelled to acknowledge the Cisalpine Republic founded by Bonaparte in Italy. In return, however, with a lordly hand, the French General gave to Austria the territory of the Republic of Venice, which State he had overrun with his arms, although it had stood out as neutral in the war.

Very soon afterwards, with the treaty in his pocket, the victorious General arrived in Paris to present the document officially to the Directors. Talleyrand, now Minister for Foreign Affairs, warned his friend Madame de Staël that Bonaparte was to arrive at his official residence on the morning of December 6th, 1797. She, of all those in Paris, was burning to gaze upon the features of the young conqueror, of whom it was said that not only was he a disinterested lover of liberty, but an ardent student of the modern philosophers and the poets of present and past ages. Germaine's romantic enthusiasm was aroused to the highest pitch by the successful Corsican's feats of arms, and for long past she had been impatiently awaiting the opportunity of, as herself a distinguished person, patting him on the back and expressing to him her unqualified approbation and admiration.

Madame de Staël had not, however, waited for General Bonaparte's arrival crowned with bays, but had already written to him more than once when at the

head of his army, comparing him in highflown terms to Scipio and other heroes of old.

The object of her admiration at a later epoch discanted sarcastically on the bad taste of Madame de Staël as displayed in one of her letters. Bonaparte was already married to the widowed Josephine de Beauharnais, whom he had caused to follow him to Italy, and notwithstanding her habits of indulging in violent flirtations with other men, was still deeply in love with her. Germaine de Staël in her eulogium had gone so far as to tell him that it was "a monstrosity that a man of his genius should be united to a little insignificant Creole, incapable of either appreciating or understanding him." General Bourrienne relates in his *Mémoires* that the young Commander-in-Chief would read to him the letters he received from the ardent lady, and remark: "Bourrienne, can you conceive such extravagances? The woman is crazy! A woman of a fine intelligence, a maker of sentiment, to compare herself to Josephine! Bourrienne, I will not answer such letters."

Upon the occasion of the 18th Fructidor, when General Augereau was in Paris, Germaine consulted him eagerly concerning Bonaparte. Fearing lest he might be carried away by ambition and crush Liberty, she asked if it was true that he thought of making himself the King of Lombardy. Knowing the woman he had to deal with, Augereau replied diplomatically: "Oh dear no, he is a young man far too well brought up for that!" The answer pleased her; by it she was convinced that Napoleon Bonaparte was as fond

of liberty and as good a Republican as she was herself.

In a great state of excitement, Germaine was in Talleyrand's reception room an hour at least before the arrival of the short, pale young man, the hero of the day. He was tired-looking, as though wearied from his journey or his campaigns.

Talleyrand presented her to Bonaparte, who merely made a few civil phrases. After telling Madame de Staël politely that in passing through Switzerland he had been sorry to have missed seeing her father, he turned to speak to someone else. She was, as she tells us in her *Considerations on the French Revolution*, for once tongue-tied; she felt a difficulty in breathing while speaking to the conquering hero that she had never experienced with anyone else.

Thus took place the first interview, in which, according to Talleyrand, Bonaparte "paid but little attention" to Madame de Staël. From the day of this first meeting it was almost as if the couple—the famous young man of twenty-eight, the celebrated young woman of thirty—stood on the greensward facing each other, as duellists, rapier in hand.

The one would henceforth seek to dominate, the other, while always presenting the point, artfully contrive to retire, to side-step, to elude, until the time should come for an overpowering counter-attack which would prove fatal.

The first public function in honour of Bonaparte took place a few days later. Then, after the Directors had solemnly received the Treaty of Campo Formio

from the hands of the General, now surrounded by a brilliant staff, they all embraced him. Talleyrand pronounced an adulatory address, the bands played, the cannons thundered.

Among those present to join in the universal homage was Germaine. With her burning black eyes fixed piercingly upon his, she was thenceforth always *en evidence* where Napoleon Bonaparte was present. She "harried" him at dinners, balls, official receptions, while trying to take possession of him, to bring him under her sway, to cause his glory thenceforth to shine with a reflected light emanating from her own illustrious person.

It was in vain, however! The young hero had no wish to share his glory with Madame de Staël. He neither wanted the passion which she seemed so ready to shower upon him nor her patronage. For the present he was contented with his eminently feminine Josephine; he did not like mannish women, literary women. The kind of women that were always getting themselves talked about were not to his fancy. He feared them, and, accordingly, systematically withheld himself from Germaine. In vain she asked him to a ball at her house—he was engaged elsewhere. He had divined that she wished to make of him the flagstaff from which to fly the colours of her political projects, but Napoleon Bonaparte intended to be nobody's flagstaff but his own. Nor would he be chained to the triumphal car of any woman, no matter how celebrated she might be. That might be all well enough for some ambitious young literary man picked up in

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE AT MALMAISON

From an engraving after the picture by Isabey

[*Facing p.* 80

Switzerland—a Benjamin Constant, for instance—but it was not good enough for the saviour of the Republic, the man who had inflicted a crushing defeat upon the enemies of France.

If nothing else were required to instil caution at this period into the mind of Bonaparte, there was the instinct of self-preservation. He was not yet firmly installed in his seat, and it was necessary for him to consolidate his position, to go slow. The Directors might embrace him, but they were jealous of him and would very gladly welcome an opportunity of kicking him down the ladder again. For this reason it was that the time-serving Talleyrand, anxious to follow the fortunes of the rising man, had introduced into his welcoming speech some carefully chosen phrases. "Ah!" he exclaimed. "Far from fearing that which one would call his ambition, I feel that it may perhaps be necessary to solicit him one day to tear himself from the sweetness of studious retreat. The whole of France may be free, he perhaps never."

Napoleon Bonaparte was himself working along these lines, dressing modestly, living modestly, praising up men of science, literary institutions, education, declaring that his greatest ambition was to merit to be appointed to the National Institute. When actually appointed, he signed himself not merely Bonaparte, "Commander-in-Chief," but Bonaparte, "Member of the National Institute," an act of modesty which greatly prepossessed numbers of people in his favour, and none more so than the woman who was continually

endeavouring to make of him something in her life, as she sought to become a great deal in his.

Bonaparte, however, was well aware of the reputation of Madame de Staël for getting her friends into trouble. He knew how under both the National Convention and the Directory she had been asked to leave France, where she was indeed only living at that very moment under a suspended sentence of banishment. It had but been owing to the prayer of Benjamin Constant to the Directory that an order for her to retire to Switzerland had been recently revoked. Should Bonaparte now commit the folly of uniting himself with one who was the constant anxiety of the ruling party of the day, and detested, moreover, by those of the other parties, the Royalists, the Moderates, who had suffered so greatly at the time of the 18th Fructidor, when Madame de Staël had supported the *coup d'état?* Napoleon decided that he would do no such thing! The Baroness de Staël was constantly compromising her friends, and he could not afford to become her friend merely to be compromised. So he would leave her alone; that is to say, he would be civil, nothing more than that.

This, then, was the line he followed. Compelled to meet Madame de Staël, and often to find himself under the fire of her burning glances, he never committed himself, never melted.

She herself tells us as much. In her *Considerations upon the French Revolution* Madame de Staël mentions the fact that when Napoleon Bonaparte felt her eyes upon him "his face became as marble."

She did not, however, cease upon that account to pursue the man for whom she felt such an unbounded admiration, but for a long time still endeavoured to bend him to her purpose, to bring him to her feet.

Only when she found Napoleon absolutely impervious to the assaults of her coquetry did she abandon the pursuit. Then it was that she decided to oppose his policy.

CHAPTER IX

GERMAINE, SIEYÈS, BONAPARTE, AND BENJAMIN

THERE are a couple of instances on record of occasions upon which, in these early days, Napoleon scored off Germaine by his quickness of repartee. This lady, selecting an opportunity when plenty of people were assembled, accosted the General and asked him pointedly: "Whom do you think the most celebrated woman in the world, alive or dead?"

If Madame de Staël thought that she was going to extract a fulsome compliment, she was very soon undeceived. With a freedom savouring more of the camp than the boudoir, Bonaparte replied, with a mocking smile:

"The woman who has brought the most children into the world!" ("*Celle qui a fait le plus d'enfants.*")

Upon another public occasion Germaine asked pointedly, "Are you fond of women?" "I love my wife," was the smart reply of Napoleon.

In spite of rebuffs which might have discouraged a less enterprising woman, Madame de Staël was never disconcerted, and even boldly attacked Bonaparte upon the subject of the proposed occupation of Switzerland by the French arms. This occupation she told him that she "would not have." The nominal reason for the invasion was the constant quarrelling in

Switzerland between the aristocratic and popular parties, the Government of the Directory professing the intention to protect the latter from the aggression of the former.

Madame de Staël had at heart a very good reason why she " would not have " the French in Switzerland. This was that her father's name was still recorded on the list of the *émigrés*, notwithstanding the fact that he was Swiss and not French. According to the Republican law, any *émigré* found residing in any territory occupied by French troops was subject to death. M. Jacques Necker would therefore be in peril of his life. The argument advanced, however, by Madame de Staël with Bonaparte was that it would be dishonouring for any country to obtain its liberty save by its own efforts. Upon this subject she embarked with her usual flow of words. Seeing Germaine becoming excited over her own flowery descriptions of the happiness, the beauty of Switzerland, Bonaparte replied dryly : " Yes, that is all very well, but the inhabitants require political rights all the same." And then he in turn launched forth upon the subject of the beauty of the country, while quite evading the question of the proposed occupation, to which Madame de Staël had vainly sought to pin him down.

Not very long after this Napoleon started off for his Egyptian campaign. While he was away in the East, Germaine's mind was kindled with a renewed enthusiasm concerning her hero, who now appeared to her fervent imagination to shine on a par with an Alexander the Great, or some other Eastern conqueror

of old. Could she but have done so, she would willingly have embarked upon a ship to share Bonaparte's fortunes in the Orient.

He was not allowed to ignore the fact that he was not forgotten by his ardent admirer, and, feeling safer at a distance, Bonaparte allowed himself in return to indulge a little on paper in compliment to the woman of whom he was anxious not to make an enemy. When he wrote that he had read her books, which he had had sent him to Cairo, and that they had interested him deeply, Madame de Staël was in the seventh heaven of delight; and she wrote off to her father, who replied that he shared in her joy upon "having become glorious upon the banks of the Nile."

Politically, Germaine was exerting herself greatly at this time, preaching the principles of moderation, and in especial begging Barras for the recall of the unfortunate beings who after Fructidor had been exiled to die of fever in Guiana. An eloquent appeal for pity and justice which she sent to him was really very fine. She declared that "pity was the one passion of her heart." Her Republican friends were not, however, pleased with her, and said that if she had felt that way she had better have left Fructidor alone.

Among Madame de Staël's political friends was Sieyès, one of the most remarkable figures of the whole of the Revolutionary period. A man of immense brain-power, the Abbé Sieyès had been mainly instrumental in drawing up the varying forms of Constitutions which had been tried in turn in France, only to be discarded one after another. Having been one of the

regicides, Sieyès was available from the first for a seat on the Directorate, but had refused to become a Director until the year 1799. By that time, like Barras, who had been truckling with the Royalist party, Sieyès had become sick of the cruelly-disposed Jacobin element, which had become secured in power by the *coup d'état* of Fructidor. He wanted something new, and was anxious to be the leading element in bringing about a change by which the Jacobin element should be got rid of.

Like him, Madame de Staël, Benjamin Constant the able journalist Rœderer, and half a dozen others were quietly preparing a new *coup d'état,* one by which the real ideas of the Revolution should be preserved ; that is to say, they wished to save the Republic from the domination of the party which appeared quite ready to plunge France back into a reign of bloodshed and terror as a means of maintaining its own ascendancy.

Before the return of Bonaparte from Egypt at the end of October, 1799, the partisans of Sieyès were already casting about in their minds for a means to establish the proposed new Constitution. Sieyès himself said : " One can found nothing by the aid of blunderers and chatterboxes ; two things are needed : a head and a sword." There was no difficulty about the former ; the Abbé thought that his own head was good enough—but the sword ? Someone of great determination was required, and yet he should be a General who, after being used, would be ready to step aside and take a back seat, allowing the civil power to remain supreme

That successful General, Moreau, was thought of, but was rejected by Sieyès as not having sufficient decision of character. And then, just in the nick of time, Bonaparte returned from Egypt. It seemed to Sieyès and those behind him that Bonaparte would be just the man that they wanted. After the famous occasion of " the whiff of grapeshot " in Paris he had not attempted to assert himself. Why, then, should he now attempt to do more than was needed of him; why attempt to dominate the Government, which would remain secure in power after the two Assemblies had been purged of all those whom it was sought to get rid of ?

No time was lost by Sieyès in indulging in an intrigue with Bonaparte, the result of which was that by the use of armed forces, which invaded the Assemblies, there was on November 9th, 1799, accomplished the Revolution known as that of the 18th Brumaire of the Republican year VIII.

This Revolution differed from that of the 18th Fructidor in that, although the same means were employed upon both occasions, that of Brumaire had for object to destroy not the power of the Royalists but that of the Jacobins. It proved absolutely successful, and that, too, without the actual shedding of any blood.

Now, however, came in a factor upon which Sieyès, Madame de Staël, and the others who had plotted for this revolution of Brumaire had by no means reckoned. This was the ambition of Bonaparte. While Barras was sent off to the country under an armed escort, and

many other prominent men were put under arrest, Bonaparte, the successful General with an army behind him, was left at the top of the tree. Moreover, that was where he intended to remain ! Thus Brumaire had brought about the commencement of the Dictatorship by which France was to be dominated for so many years, although at first the result appeared to be merely the establishment of a triumvirate of three Consuls, they being Sieyès, Bonaparte, and Roger Ducos.

Before very long Sieyès retired, accepting a very large sum of money, an estate, and the title of Comte de Crône. For he had found in Napoleon Bonaparte, who became First Consul, a master instead of the servant that he had bargained for.

An amusing but sarcastic skit was published upon the occasion of the gilded retreat of Sieyès :

> *" Sieyès à Bonaparte avait promis un trône,*
> *Sous ses débris brillants voulant l'ensevelir,*
> *Bonaparte à Sieyès a fait présent de Crône*
> *Pour le payer et l'avilir."*

The enthusiasm and joy of Madame de Staël at the success of Bonaparte were intense. She was absolutely enchanted at the result of the bloodless revolution, and especially when the first results of the accession of the Consuls to power became evident in an unlimited tolerance and universal justice. All of the still surviving wretches who had been sent after Fructidor to Guiana were recalled ; the churches, which had been closed for years, were reopened ; many of the *émigrés* had their names expunged from the lists of those forbidden to return to France. An era of peace

and concord seemed indeed commencing, especially as even those who were imprisoned at first after the *coup d'état* of Brumaire were released.

Germaine was particularly grateful to Bonaparte for recalling the exiles from the plague-stricken swamps of Guiana. Her own name had been among those held up to execration by the Royalists and Moderates in connection with those banishments after Fructidor. She hoped that now by the clemency of the First Consul her own share in bringing about that terrible *coup d'état* would be forgotten.

Another cause of pleasure to Madame de Staël was the prospect now opened of obtaining some profitable post under the new Government for her clever and ambitious lover, Benjamin Constant. The merits and capabilities of this young man had long been recognised in Paris, but his birth as a Swiss had been against him hitherto. This bar to the advancement of Constant might now perhaps be overcome. Under the new Constitution, below the three Consuls there were to be formed a Senate and two legislative bodies, one called the Assembly, the other named the Tribunat. This latter, which was to be eminently the debating chamber, would, it seemed to Germaine, be exactly the place in which Benjamin should be able to display his talents to advantage.

No time was lost by Madame de Staël in getting a powerful friend, named Chabaud-Latour, to present Benjamin Constant to Bonaparte, who had already heard of him and read some of his works. This gentleman took Benjamin first to Bonaparte and then to

Sieyès, but was, according to his own account, astounded by the assurance and duplicity he displayed. To each of the Consuls in turn Benjamin expressed his devotion; upon each he showered compliments and flatteries. But to Bonaparte he cleverly ran down Sieyès as " not a man of action, but an idealist," while to Sieyès he expressed his delight that he was " a man of principle and justice, not a man of the sword." Constant obtained his appointment to the Tribunat!

CHAPTER X

GERMAINE'S ATTACK—AND PUNISHMENT

By the new Constitution, which was, incidentally, the fourth adopted since 1789, Bonaparte was appointed First Consul for ten years. Though only the first out of three, he practically ruled France. The country still retained the name of Republic, but it was a Republic where one man was supreme. "In future," he said, "we will have no parties, no Jacobins, no Royalists, but only Frenchmen." The better to support his supremacy, Napoleon Bonaparte suppressed a number of the newspapers, while warning the remainder to be cautious. One or two of the papers, however, he maintained as semi-official organs of the Government; one of these was edited by Rœderer hitherto the friend of the Baroness de Staël, and another by an able writer named M. de Fontanes.

As mentioned already, Constant was appointed to the Tribunat, which was to speak without voting, while the other Assembly, the legislative body, was to vote without speaking. The Senate and these two bodies first came into operation at the beginning of January, 1800, and there was at once an active discussion as to whether the Tribunat was to figure as an organised opposition to the Government or, as Rœderer maintained in a vigorous signed article in

the *Journal de Paris*, as an assembly to support its efficiency.

From an entry in Napoleon's diary in St. Helena it is evident that he himself was the direct cause of putting Benjamin into the Tribunat. His brother, Joseph Bonaparte, was for long an intimate friend of Madame de Staël, and Napoleon states in his above-mentioned *Journal*: "Joseph worried me to cause the nomination of Constant to the Tribunat. I was shy of doing so at first, but I ended by yielding. I wrote about it to Lebrun, and Benjamin was appointed."

The article by Rœderer mentioned above was brought about as follows. At the first meeting of the Tribunat, one of its members, named Duveyrier, made a spiteful speech. The hall of the Tribunat was on the site of the Palais Royal, where in 1789 that ill-fated journalist Camille Desmoulins was the first to mount the cockade which became the tricolour emblem of revolutionary France. In his speech Duveyrier, after referring to this national cockade and to Camille, spoke of the historic spot upon which he and his colleagues were assembled, making use of the following expression: "This place, where, if one spoke of an idol of fifteen days, one would recall to oneself the fact that an idol of fifteen centuries had been shattered in a single day."

The allusion to the First Consul was too plain, and Paris was up in arms at this first attack made upon the popular hero. As a result, Duveyrier was forced to eat humble pie, while for a day or two Constant sat quietly saying nothing.

Meanwhile, it is well to consider what was the state of mind at this period of Germaine, who had been the sponsor of her Benjamin. She, like Constant himself, had it in her mind to re-establish a regular Republican form of government, and vainly imagined that if General Bonaparte made any menacing show of ambition it would be easy enough to unseat him. Added to this delusion, she wished herself, if not actually to dominate the First Consul, at all events to share his power on equal terms, and thought that such a state of things could be easily brought about if only the situation were properly exploited. He had not, it is true, fallen at her feet as a result of the exercise of her fascinations, but the time had come for other measures. She still admired Bonaparte deeply, even if he appeared to disdain her. Germaine had not yet arrived at the stage when "hell holds no fury like a woman scorned," but she was sore, and felt that the time had come when she would compel Napoleon to acknowledge the fact that she, Madame la Baronne de Staël, was one whom he would do well to reckon with. All that would be necessary would be to instil a little fear of her into his heart. This accomplished—and it would not be difficult—all would go well. Then she would no longer be disdained, her wounded pride would be salved, and her innate ambition gratified; she would become a power in the State.

With her Benjamin safely seated in the Tribunat had come about Germaine's opportunity. No longer would it be necessary to ask for favours, for on the morrow of the execution of her plan it would be the

First Consul who would be coming round to her, hat in hand.

So argued the self-confident young woman, and she proceeded to put her plan into execution ; but she had not waited until this moment to irritate, if not to alarm, the First Consul.

Hearing of the daily reunions in Madame de Staël's salon, where in an agitated manner she declaimed upon the subject of the alarm that she felt for the cause of liberty, Napoleon sent his brother Joseph to her, to remind her as a friend that what the nation required at the moment was peace, not political discussion calculated to set everybody and everything once more upside down. Joseph Bonaparte fulfilled to the best of his ability his mission of peace. He told her that his brother was ready to accord her anything she wanted—leave to reside in Paris, the return of the two millions of francs lent by her father, Necker, to the Government of Louis XVI., anything else in reason she might desire, if only she would stop talking, disturbing Paris. "Ask her what it is she really wants," Napoleon had said to his brother. Instead of meeting these friendly overtures in a friendly manner, Germaine assumed a noble attitude, and replied crushingly : "It is not a matter of what I want, but of what I think." Joseph was obliged to go back to his brother with his tail between his legs.

After this failure to come to an agreement with the unreasonable woman had followed the bombshell of Duveyrier's speech. Napoleon no doubt knew that there was more to be expected of the same nature, but

doubtless hoped for good results from Rœderer's article, which represented the duty of a cessation of agitation at a moment when the Government was only seeking to bring about universal calm.

Benjamin Constant proved now more far-seeing than Madame de Staël, and before obeying the behest of his arbitrary mistress warned her what she would have to expect.

She had her salon crowded on the night of January 4th, 1800. Among others present was Lucien Bonaparte, Napoleon's second brother. Benjamin came up to Germaine and said: "To-night your house is crowded; all the world is here—people whom you like to have about you—but if I speak in the Tribunat as you desire, to-morrow it will be a desert; think it well over." According to the Duchesse d'Abrantès, he added: "He knows where you are vulnerable: be prudent."

Her reply was: "One must act according to one's convictions." The foolish woman was too sure of her power, and determined, in spite of good advice, to brave the First Consul, to throw down the gauntlet to the man before whom already the nation bowed.

On the morrow, accordingly, Benjamin spoke in the Tribunat against the propositions of the Government. He spoke with nervous eloquence well besprinkled with sarcasm. We need not give the words of his speech which, while nominally merely an assertion of the independence of the Tribunat, was a powerful and bitter attack upon the powers of the First Consul. The speech was most eloquent.

The deed was done; all the fat was in the fire! The rage of Bonaparte was unbounded. It was not the ingratitude of Benjamin that he felt, for he, like all the world, knew whence came the blow. Nor was he long before he struck back at the woman who to indulge her pride had attacked him before all France. The press of Paris, instigated by Napoleon, was bitter, and in the most bitingly sarcastic terms inveighed against Madame de Staël, while denouncing her for having inspired Constant. All parties alike fell upon the unfortunate woman, the Royalist press vieing with the Jacobin organs in abuse. One Royalist paper, with the extraordinary name of *The Angel Gabriel*, had evidently not forgotten the old Royalist hatred against Necker, who had in the latter days of the monarchy cut down right and left the charges of the indolent nobles who battened upon the people. It was really humorous in the way in which it described how, while running about after glory, Madame de Staël was ready to pardon any amount of abuse so long as she succeeded in getting herself talked about. *The Angel Gabriel* had plenty to say on the subject of metaphysics, "which she wrote of without understanding"; on that of morality, "which she talked of without practising"; and of the virtues of her sex, "which she did not possess."

Nor was she spared on the subject of her association with Constant, to whom, after having invested him with the toga of the Tribune, she is supposed to say: "Cry, my friend; be tempestuous; make a row! Let yourself loose against authority—that's the way to get on in the world!"

In the end, the paper was particularly playful in the way in which it summarised Germaine's ambitions. Benjamin was to become a Consul, to Papa Necker she would give the Ministry of Finances, her husband would have an ambassadorial post, a long way off, while she herself would boss everything, not forgetting the National Institute.

A Jacobin paper called *Le Peuple*, if not so witty, was downright abusive and even threatening in the advice which it gave to Madame de Staël, addressing her as follows : " It is not your fault if you are ugly, but it is your fault if you are an intriguer. Correct yourself promptly, for your reign is no longer here. You know well the road to Switzerland ; you had better try it once again if you do not wish some evil to befall you. I have judged you, judged also your talents. Since you arrived in my house everything has gone topsy-turvy. Carry off your Benjamin with you, let him go and try his talents in the Swiss Senate. Let him beware of coming to trouble a people that is as sick of his manœuvres as it is of your own."

In no paper perhaps did Madame de Staël meet with more severe treatment than in one belonging to the Jacobin press which was at this time the property of Fouché, the celebrated head of the Police of Bonaparte and afterwards Duke of Otranto, but it would be tedious to make further quotations. Suffice it to say that, to quote a modern phrase, Germaine " had asked for it, and she had got it," and from all directions alike.

It was not, however, only from the press of Paris

that Madame de Staël was to receive punishment, but greater than she could bear. For the great man whom she had so unjustifiably provoked knew how to strike back at her in the way which she would feel most, and no doubt took a malicious pleasure in so doing. At a hint from him, she found herself deserted by her friends.

In her triumph at what she considered the success of Benjamin's speech, which was highly praised in some malcontent quarters, Madame de Staël sent out invitations for a big dinner to celebrate the event. Hardly a soul that she cared to receive would come to it. She received refusal after refusal. Even Talleyrand, her old friend, who owed his position to her, sent a letter declining to come to her house. At this defection more than all Germaine was overcome. When it was too late, she regretted the mad impulse which had driven her to make an unprovoked attack upon forces stronger than her own.

The punishment of Madame de Staël was not, however, yet complete. She was sent for by Fouché, then Minister of Police, who in terms of the greatest politeness—for Fouché was always polite—informed her that, no doubt through being misinformed, the First Consul seemed to think that she it was who had stirred Constant up against him. And Fouché suggested that it would be a good idea if for the benefit of her health Madame de Staël should retire for a time to her country residence at Saint-Ouen. Resistance to the polite appeal was useless. Germaine had to leave Paris.

CHAPTER XI

GERMAINE PUBLISHES A NEW BOOK

When, after her temporary seclusion at Saint-Ouen, Germaine returned to Paris, it might have been thought that solitude and reflection would have brought her sense, and that for a period, at all events, she would have left the First Consul alone, and thus have given him time, if not to forget her, to forget his irritation with her. Could she but have done this, being on the friendly terms that she was with his brothers Joseph and Lucien, all might have been patched up. Bonaparte would have forgiven her; they might even have become friends. Unfortunately, Madame de Staël took a contrary line and did everything that she could to recall her existence to the man whom she had offended. Wherever the First Consul was to be found, there, if only she could contrive to be present, was Germaine likewise to be seen. At any price she was determined to see Bonaparte; above all to compel him to notice her. For his part, when he could contrive to avoid her, to avoid even appearing to see that she was present at any public function, he did so.

In her pursuit, Madame de Staël met with continued rebuffs. When, by asking the hostess, she had

obtained an invitation to a house where Bonaparte was expected, he did not come. On another occasion, at a ball, she was left alone in a corner; not a single person came near her save one young lady, who took pity on the deserted woman and moved to her side to keep her company. This kindly-hearted person was a widow, and her name before marriage had been Delphine de Sabran. It was as a sign of her gratitude that, subsequently, Madame de Staël made use of her name, Delphine, as the title of the first of her famous novels, the heroine of which was a young widow.

From Talleyrand, her old lover, Germaine expected kinder treatment than she had received when he had refused to come to her dinner given in honour of Benjamin. She thought that she would try him again when he was giving a ball in Bonaparte's honour, and accordingly wrote to him, asking him to give her an invitation, " in the name of their old friendship." But the man whom she had loved, and for whom she had done so much, once more failed her. Talleyrand's reply was : " In the name of our old friendship, I beg of you not to come."

Much as one may despise the character of Talleyrand de Périgord, it must be admitted that upon this occasion he could not well do otherwise than ask Germaine to stay away if he wished his ball to be a success.

Bonaparte from the first commenced, with the aid of his wife, Josephine, to form the nucleus of what was eventually to become a brilliant Court. Not by any

means a moral man in his own private life, he nevertheless before long endeavoured to establish decency in the outward relations of those who consorted with his by no means too straitlaced spouse. Accordingly, he gave orders to those about him, like Tallien and Talleyrand, who in the old free-and-easy way of the Directory lived openly with their mistresses, to amend their ways, and to turn their beautiful paramours into their wives.

The habits of one person, however, the First Consul found himself unable to control, and it was a subject of great annoyance to him to see how openly Germaine flouted all morality. He brought up as a cause of reproach against her the fact that she publicly exhibited her relations with Benjamin Constant, while appearing to be entirely oblivious of the fact that there existed such a person as the Baron de Staël.

He resolutely closed the doors of the Tuileries to those early friends of Josephine who made themselves too conspicuous by the manner of their lives, but throughout the whole of Napoleon's career as the ruler of France he found Madame de Staël a thorn in his side. The bad example set by this great lady, who never troubled herself to alter her free mode of living, upset greatly Bonaparte's efforts at social reform and gave him constantly cause to rail against the liberty of her conduct, which, he said, "displayed a return to the worst habits of the society of the eighteenth century."

The manner in which Germaine chose to lead her private existence did not, however, really tend to upset

the First Consul very greatly. Probably he was not sorry to be able to make use of it as a means of depreciating the woman who was constantly behaving in a way to make it appear as though she looked upon him as an enemy.

This, however, for a long time she by no means did in her heart. Indeed, it was the opinion of Joseph Bonaparte that more than ever after the affair of Benjamin in the Tribunat was she anxious to become Napoleon's friend. Joseph told his brother so in the following words: "If only you would show a little goodwill towards her, she would adore you." According to Lucien Bonaparte, in his *Mémoires*, the answer to this remark that Napoleon made was: "Oh, that's too much! I don't fancy those sorts of adorations; she's too ugly!"

Ugly Germaine was, speaking technically, but there was that about her to make one forget her ugliness. Those challenging black eyes, which only too often contained an invitation, made many a man's heart beat quicker when he found them fixed upon his own. It is more than probable that had not Madame de Staël been so determined from the first to chain him openly to her car, the First Consul, young as he was and full of the ardour of living, would not have so piqued himself to resist the compelling power of those burning eyes. But she attacked him in the wrong way; it was not by a display of her superior strength of mind, her noisy advocacy of opinions opposed to his own, that she could compel Napoleon to recognise her as desirable, whether as a woman or a political associate.

There was undoubtedly something about Necker's daughter, in addition to her eyes, to make her attractive to men possessing brains, and this something was evidently beyond that of the mere sensuality of a buxom woman standing at the corner of a street leering at the passers-by with a bold look of invitation. Had this been all, how could she have not only won to her side, but been able to retain as her friends for years, such a string of those possessed with perhaps more than the usual amount of brain-power? To quote a few of those with whom we know Madame de Staël to have been on intimate terms, we find Narbonne, Talleyrand, Mathieu de Montmorency, Benjamin Constant, Camille Jordan, Henri Meister, M. de Gérando, and Auguste Schlegel. We do not select these names as those of lovers for whom she entertained a passion, but as intellectual companions who found pleasure in her society owing to a personal attraction which they found in her quite apart from her looks or femininity; intelligent men who continued for long to enjoy that companionship without the passion of love having anything to do with the case. What was, then, the cause of this attraction? Surely it must have been that Madame de Staël was possessed of an intelligence above the ordinary. She called it her genius.

In the beginning of the year 1802 Bonaparte cleared Benjamin Constant with nineteen others out of the Tribunat. There then ensued a violent outburst on the part of Constant's mistress, who started what was described as "an opposition of talk"—chiefly talk

about liberty, which had been outraged by the First Consul in laying his sacrilegious hand upon the Tribunat—upon her Benjamin!

The declamations of Germaine in her salon became acrimonious and satirical. She said that Bonaparte had "not purified, but skimmed the cream off," the Assembly which he had mutilated. Further, she became abusive. Bonaparte called all of the party of the eighteenth-century Philosophers, whose tenets Madame de Staël still professed, by the name of "ideologues," which means persons occupied with ideas having no significance.

Germaine replied by saying that for her part she considered Bonaparte as an "ideophobe," a hater of all ideas. This expression touched the First Consul upon the raw; he was quite excited when he heard of his new appellation. "Ideophobe!" he exclaimed. "That's pretty! That smells of Madame de Staël a league away! Ideophobe! It's quite gracious! But why not hydrophobe? Oh, she wants war, does she? How on earth is one going to govern when there are people of that class about?" He sent Talleyrand round to warn the too voluble lady to take care or she might get herself into trouble. To this message Madame de Staël proudly made reply: "Genius is also a power!"

In the previous year Madame de Staël had brought out a new work which indeed proved her to be one of the ideologues—one of the old eighteenth-century Philosophical party whose tenets had brought about the Revolution of 1789. The lengthy name of this

weighty book was *On Literature Considered in its Relations with Social Institutions.*

The publication, coming as it did soon after Benjamin Constant's speech in the Tribunat, was looked upon more as an act of defiance to the First Consul than a literary event. The book was indeed a political profession of faith. Madame de Staël in its pages held the pen on behalf of the party of the Philosophers, whose apology it was.

It preached the author's belief in the law of progress and of " Perfectibility "—this perfectibility of mankind to be attained not by the action of a despotic Government, but by the maintenance of those principles from the exercise of which the institution of the French Republic had been attained. According to the author, from nothing else could any good arise; anything done contrary to the ideas which had resulted in the overthrow of personal government in the days of the Revolution was an arbitrary exercise of force, destructive of liberty and inimical to the State.

Although the name of Bonaparte was never mentioned in this book *On Literature,* from beginning to end of its pages he was attacked in allusions of which it was impossible to mistake the meaning.

As might have been expected, the publication resulted in a renewal of political excitement. From Madame de Staël's point of view it attained its object at once, by showing that the writer was by no means dead, that she could not be crushed or treated as a nonentity, even if her talents had not been recognised by the First Consul in the way that they merited. By

those who thought as she did, those still imbued with the spirit of the eighteenth century, the author was applauded warmly. Those who, on the other hand, had witnessed all the horrors brought about by the Revolution, and now were grateful to the First Consul for having instituted a rule of social peace, were infuriated at this new presentation of antiquated ideas, this attack upon a system which had restored law and order.

One of the veiled attacks made upon Bonaparte consisted in a general deprecation of military ambition. Madame de Staël enlarged upon the subject of the military spirit being subversive of freedom. It was, she said, a danger in free States. She further drew an analogy between military discipline and that of the Church, which had not, by the way, as yet been re-established in France, pointing out that the discipline to which the priests were subjected was one calculated to destroy the freedom of reason.

When, in addition, Germaine let her pen go freely to attack as a purely frivolous glory the glory attained by the use of arms, she set the seal definitely upon her act of defiance. For in what way, save on the wave of military glory, had the First Consul been swept to his commanding position at the head of the State ?

No one had hitherto ventured to accuse Bonaparte of tyranny. The book *On Literature* had the result of making the malcontents, who had hitherto been dumb, commence to murmur the word between their teeth.

It is no wonder if the bold authoress was soon driven to exasperation by the attacks made in the press upon her doctrine of Perfectibility, attacks which accused her of seeking to revive the revolutionary spirit. Upon the whole, she was, however, satisfied with what she had done. She had compelled the world to talk about her.

CHAPTER XII

GERMAINE CONSPIRES WITH BERNADOTTE

It was in vain that Bonaparte from time to time sent his brothers Joseph and Lucien to Germaine to represent to her how very much wiser she would be if she would keep quiet and not agitate the minds of people, for she paid no attention to them. The First Consul told his brothers to point out that he was not a Louis XVI. or even a Barras, who could be got rid of, and that it was futile on the part of Madame de Staël to endeavour to bar his road or block him in his projects. Finally, he threatened that "if she would not leave him alone he would break her," but, at the same time, Bonaparte told his brothers that "he did not wish to harm her unnecessarily." Nothing, however, that Bonaparte could do, no hint that he could convey, was of any use, for Madame de Staël continued her eternal intrigues as gaily as ever. Whenever, in especial, anything of importance took place in the State, and it did not agree with her principles or suit her personal views, Napoleon was bound to hear of it before long, to be made in some way or other to feel the weight of Germaine's displeasure. There is no doubt that she succeeded in making Bonaparte fear her, for, quite apart from her drawing-room intrigues, he never knew how she might not get at him by the use of her facile pen.

In the year 1801, owing to the very important step

taken in religious matters by the First Consul, Germaine experienced a bitter disappointment.

Her ideas on religion were nebulous in the extreme, imbued as she was with the philosophical views of Jean Jacques Rousseau, but she possessed, or seemed to possess, a vague kind of religiosity. Madame de Staël, however, never forgot that she had been born in a Protestant household, of Protestant parents, and therefore affected occasionally to talk about "we Protestants" or "we Calvinists."

During the years before the re-establishment of religion in France, Madame de Staël, who, as all the Philosophers of the eighteenth century, hated the Catholic priesthood, hoped for the establishment of Protestantism as the State religion. Bonaparte appears to have thought over the matter well, but he came to the conclusion that as a political move he would do far better to re-introduce the Roman Catholic faith, and thus secure the support of a powerful party in the country to back up the army and himself, instead of remaining as a secret and dangerous counter-influence. Accordingly the First Consul came to the famous agreement called the Concordat with Pope Pius VII., and on Easter Day, 1802, the union with the old Church of France was celebrated with the greatest pomp in Paris.

While cannons thundered all day long, the three Consuls, all the other great officials of State, and the archbishops and bishops who for years had been destitute of their clerical appointments, proceeded to the Cathedral of Nôtre Dame in the midst of thousands

of the veterans of the wars of the Republic. Never had there been seen such a grand ceremony in France. While the enthusiastic crowds cried "Vive Bonaparte!" until they were hoarse, at the gates of the cathedral a hundred and fifty of the finest musicians discoursed sacred music. The Archbishop who delivered the sermon, and cried for the blessing of God upon a France which had once again become Christian, was no less than he who, in 1774, the year of his accession, had consecrated the unfortunate Louis XVI. at Rheims. On this occasion the Archbishop of Aix did not forget to praise up the wisdom and moderation of the First Consul, by whose agency such a miraculous reversal of the irreligious spirit of the Revolution had become possible.

What must not have been, however, the secret ironical jeers of thousands of those who participated in the triumphant spectacle, as they recalled the brutality with which the Church had been cast down, and the thousands of lives, including that of the King, which had been lost in its overthrow?

Now was being celebrated in turn the destruction of the influence of the National Institute, which had assumed to replace religion by science, and to act in a manner as the official regulator of the moral life of France. Had not the First Consul himself publicly declared, "I am of the religion of the Institute"? And now here he was restoring Catholicism! Well, wonders would, indeed, never cease!

Among those whose irritation was most excessive was Madame de Staël. As the cannons roared and the

bands played, as the thousands of soldiers with their gold-bedizened officers tramped along the streets, the angry woman closed all her doors and windows, determined not to see, and vainly endeavouring not to hear what was taking place. To restore the Catholic religion of all others! The religion that had been responsible for the horrors of the massacre of Saint Bartholomew and of the long-drawn-out cruelties of the dragonnades in France! The Roman Catholic religion which, with its Inquisition, had burnt and tortured to death thousands upon thousands of unhappy people in Spain and in the Low Countries! The religion of a Catherine de Medicis, of a Philip II. —which had driven a million or so of Protestant refugees to seek an asylum far from their own country across the seas! Oh, it was inconceivable!

It is probable that as Germaine vainly strove to exclude from her senses the knowledge of what was taking place at Nôtre Dame upon that Easter Sunday in April she at length forgot all her old admiration. She now hated the man who had dashed to pieces all her hopes for the institution of Protestantism, upon the subject of which many representations had been made to Bonaparte by the very people who had helped him to power on the occasion of the *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire. From that moment of the ceremony at Nôtre Dame Germaine threw herself boldly into the lists against the restorer of the Catholic religion. She no longer merely spoke and wrote against the First Consul, she now actually planned and plotted his overthrow.

Before long Madame de Staël was in secret communion with one of the most renowned soldiers of the day, one who was jealous of Bonaparte. The ambitious General Bernadotte, who subsequently became King of Sweden, over which country he reigned as Charles XIV., was her co-conspirator, and soon they were in league with some dozen other officers to cast down the First Consul, to get rid of him altogether. The question was, how was this result to be attained? One or two of the plotters were for killing Bonaparte, an officer named Fournier boldly undertaking to himself shoot him down when at the head of his troops on parade. The caution of General Bernadotte would not, however, admit of this drastic means of getting rid of their enemy, for prudence was the most prominent trait in the character of Germaine's chief ally. So much was this the case that she strove to drive Bernadotte along more quickly to cause Napoleon to be carried off, which was the plan that he proposed. Madame de Staël in her ardour reminded the General that he had better hurry up, for "to-morrow the tyrant would have forty thousand priests at his service."

Bonaparte was informed by his spies of what was going on long before the conspirators had any idea that they were suspected. He sent word by his brother Joseph to Bernadotte that if he continued to plot he would have him shot down in the Place du Carrousel. Half a dozen other officers, some being of high rank, were quietly arrested and thrust into prison, whereupon General Bernadotte took himself off. The matter was kept quite secret by the

Government, which was anxious not to excite the public mind by making the conspiracy known.

The leading share of Madame de Staël in the plot was quite well known to Bonaparte, and he was in a fury with her. For the moment, however, he determined to let her, like her fellow-conspirator Bernadotte, get out of Paris unpunished. She was just about to leave for Coppet with her sick husband, who, as already mentioned, died on the journey. It was only after her arrival in Switzerland that she was informed of the First Consul's opinions concerning her treacherous action.

CHAPTER XIII

GERMAINE PUBLISHES "DELPHINE"

INSTEAD of there being any question of carrying off the First Consul by some legalised method, which had seemed possible to the prudent Bernadotte, his power was greatly increased. By a plebiscite of the nation, Bonaparte was appointed Consul for life in August, 1802, while directly afterwards the second and third Consuls were placed under his authority, to him being given the power of appointing them. As if this were not enough, the principle of heredity was recognised, Bonaparte being granted the right of naming any citizen whom he might choose to succeed himself.

Madame de Staël was not far wrong when, in her exasperation, she declared that the time was coming when the First Consul must infallibly attain the summit of Olympus.

If, however, Germaine could do anything to clog his feet while mounting the slope to the clouds, she was not going to neglect taking the opportunity of so doing. Therefore, after first encouraging her clever friend, or more than friend, Camille Jordan, to publish an irritating brochure, she supported her father, M. Necker, in the production of a political work, which he called *Last Views on Policy and Finance.*

In this work the former Controller-General of the Finances patronisingly spoke of Bonaparte as "the necessary man." The book, in which the First Consul, and, indeed, others, declared that they saw the hand of Necker's daughter, fell flat; it was found boring and altogether out of date, full of antiquated ideas on the subject of the formation of yet one more new Constitution, which nobody wanted to listen to.

As for the press of Paris, it fell upon Necker like thunder, denounced his political incapacity, his vanity, and his ignorance of mankind. Nor was Jacques Necker spared on the subject of having been the cause of endless misfortunes to others, while himself escaping all the sufferings entailed by the Revolution by living in comfort in his luxurious château beyond the borders of France.

Germaine was pleased rather than otherwise when she learned that Bonaparte had declared, truly, that hers had been the instigating power to force upon the public a work suggesting another form of government to that which left him at the head of the State. Nevertheless, she, most irrationally, wrote to "her dear Camille" that it was most unfair that Bonaparte should be vexed with her for her handiwork. While pleased at having angered Bonaparte, and declaring that it delighted her to think that she had made him fear her, she also confessed that it was "her terror." The cause of her terror was that she might find herself proscribed and forbidden to return to France.

Meanwhile her father's self-sufficiency had been so great as to cause him to send a copy of his *Last Views*

by the hand of Lebrun, the Second Consul, to Bonaparte, at the same time offering himself once more for high employment in France. The freezing reply that Lebrun wrote, evidently under instructions from the First Consul, dashed all the hopes of the vain old man. Lebrun informed Necker that "the man whom he called necessary" had no use for him, and proceeded to add some home truths concerning Madame de Staël's part in her father's publication, saying that Bonaparte was convinced that she had "worked his opinions and influenced his work."

The letter ended up with a few polite sarcasms and regrets, even with Lebrun's condolences, that never more need Necker seek for employment, as there was not the slightest hope of his desires being gratified.

While nobody in Paris was reading poor Necker's book, the First Consul was quite making up his mind that never again should his turbulent daughter be allowed to return to the city, where her sole object appeared to be to agitate public opinion. Without being officially informed that the capital of France was barred to her, Germaine's devoted friend Mathieu de Montmorency had been keeping her *au courant*, and through his relations with Joseph Bonaparte he had a very good idea that it would be wiser for Germaine not for the present to attempt to return. Her thoughts therefore turned towards Italy, to which country she projected a pleasant journey with an agreeable companion. The companion selected was Camille Jordan, but, to Madame de Staël's disappointment, when she invited him to go for the trip to the south, and,

moreover, herself offered to pay all the expenses, Camille refused to join the party. He said he did not want to go to Italy. Madame de Staël was suffering from melancholy, bored with the seclusion of Coppet, and longing for diversion, if not in one place then in another. Accordingly she wrote to Jordan in Paris that she had decided not to believe what Mathieu had told her, but to come to France. She added that Camille was to find her some place to live in near Paris, where he could come to visit her.

It must be admitted that Germaine de Staël was a courageous woman in the way that, after affronting him, she braved Napoleon Bonaparte time after time. In spite of her bravado, however, she did not feel very happy in her mind about going back to Paris after having had it reported to her that the First Consul had expressed himself in his home circle in the words: "She would do better not to return." Germaine, judging by the way in which she had been allowed to get off scot-free after her plotting with Bernadotte, must surely have learned to understand something about Bonaparte's wishes concerning her. She had far too much intelligence not to be able to see that, for one thing, he did not want to seem to give her too much importance by any drastic action where she was concerned, and that, for another, he would infinitely prefer that without any public scandal she would just peaceably stop away in Switzerland, or, indeed, any place where her noisy insistence to push herself to the fore would not be a source of disturbance and possible danger to the peace of France.

Germaine, however, could not live without excitement—constantly more excitement—her lovers, her salon full of people, in which she could display her talents. She was not, therefore, content to accept a quiet place in the background; she would not give up her friends, her concerts, her theatres—above all, her political intrigues. To do so would be to acknowledge herself vanquished, whereas, on the other hand, she proposed to show herself in the light of victor in a society of which she would be queen and excite universal admiration.

There was only one place in the world for her: that was Paris. There was the society in which, amid the storms of passion, she had in the past known how to conquer the leading place, to become the most prominent figure; back to Paris she would go. Before actually returning, however, she would prepare the way by launching a new book; not this time a mere political treatise, but a novel, which would on publication at once mark her supremacy as a woman of letters. Germaine had already got her novel written. It was named *Delphine*. When it appeared, and the First Consul had read it, even he would be compelled to admit that a woman as clever as its author was not one to be shut out of France. Even he would be ready to welcome her, to offer her his congratulations on her success.

Unfortunately, instead of Bonaparte being disarmed, the only result of the publication of Madame de Staël's romance was to increase his anger against her.

The publication of *Delphine* took place in December, 1802, and the book was an immediate success; everybody was at once reading it, and it became, in fact, the sole subject of conversation in Paris.

Apart from the merit of its passionate love-story, the chief reason of the popularity of the novel lay in the fact of its being a *roman à clef*—a book in which the characters could be recognised.

To begin with, there was Delphine d'Albémar, the young and romantic heroine, who with her enthusiasm and brilliancy of conversation, her resistless charm and utter disdain of public opinion, could not possibly be mistaken for anyone but the authoress herself. Again, that celebrated beauty, Madame Récamier, at whose feet so many hearts were laid in vain, figured under the name of Thérèse d'Ervins. The lovely Juliette Récamier, as all the world knew well, was the wife of an old banker. When, therefore, Thérèse d'Ervins was described as " the most seductive beauty of the day, and married to a man older than herself by a quarter of a century," there could be no doubt as to her identity. Talleyrand, Germaine's old and untrustworthy friend, was introduced into the book in feminine garb, figuring under the name of Madame de Vernon, whose character was described as that of a person believing in nothing, unless it were success, and whose soul was dry and cold. Madame de Vernon was, however, credited with a charm of manner which no one could resist, and this was Talleyrand to the life. Concerning this representation of himself, the astute diplomatist gave vent to his well-known epigram:

"They say that Madame de Staël has put us both into her book, and disguised us both as women!"

Among other characters whom everybody recognised were Benjamin Constant, who figured as a Protestant gentleman, brought up in England and a great partisan of divorce, and, one who was an obsequious flatterer of Bonaparte, the Prussian Ambassador Lucchesini, who was introduced under the name of the Duc de Mendoce. The above-mentioned do not complete the list of recognisable characters in *Delphine*, one of those painted as possessing all the talents and all the virtues being Germaine's own father, M. Necker.

As may easily be imagined, with such a "caste" the book gave people plenty to talk about. Then, too, the book was immoral in tendency. One of the papers criticised it as being "very dangerous and anti-social; a bad book, written with much cleverness and talent." While in another quarter fault was found with the "licentiousness of mind and imagination of *Delphine*."

This represented the views of the First Consul, who was especially angry at two things in the book: the praise of England and the defence of divorce. His family, all of whom hated the childless Josephine, had been urging their brother to divorce her and marry some foreign princess. Although he did so eventually, at this period Bonaparte considered that the restoration of decency in manners was closely wrapped up with the question of divorce, which he declared favoured the development of the passions and the relaxation of

the ties of married life. An advocacy of divorce he considered at this time as an attack upon himself.

We have already mentioned the efforts of the First Consul to wipe out in his household all resemblance to the fêtes of gallantry which in the days of the ascendency of Barras had been so frequent at the Palace of the Luxembourg. During the merry days of the Directory Greek costumes were greatly affected by the ladies. These Bonaparte now chose to characterise as being licentious. In consequence, when that perfectly lovely young woman, Madame Tallien, appeared at the opera in the becoming but airy costume of the goddess Diana, Bonaparte informed her that the day had gone by for that kind of thing, and that for the future he expected her to be decent. Madame Tallien was one of the great friends of the lively Josephine, but in his efforts at the purification of society Bonaparte was endeavouring to make his wife give up all her old friends of light reputation and confine herself to receiving the decent-living but very uninteresting wives of functionaries of State. In his efforts at home, Bonaparte was meeting with constant opposition, but in spite of the lamentations of Josephine that the women he imposed upon her dressed like scarecrows, and were distasteful to her, he eventually banished both Madame Tallien and the beautiful Mrs. Grant, whom he had ordered Talleyrand to marry, from his wife's society.

It was just while the First Consul was in the midst of his efforts to purify society, and while a bill concerning the regularisation of marriage and divorce was

being discussed in the legislative chamber, that Madame de Staël's novel, advocating the untrammelled freedom of life of the individual, came upon the tapis. The book *Delphine* was a distinct revolt against all social convention, a revolt also against the Roman Catholic Church, which Bonaparte had re-imposed on France. So much was this the case, that the heroine, after becoming a nun, breaks her vows to rejoin her lover, is perfectly prepared to marry him, and finally, in the original edition, commits the deadly crime of suicide when the hero is executed. So great was the outcry against Madame de Staël concerning this act of suicide, that in subsequent editions she was obliged to allow her heroine to die a natural death.

Bonaparte, who had excluded at least half a dozen divorced women from his wife's salon, considered the publication of Germaine's novel as a distinct act of bravado directed against his opinions. And then, worst crime of all, it praised up the detested English!

CHAPTER XIV

THE SPITE OF MADAME DE GENLIS

Not only did Germaine anger Bonaparte with her *Delphine*, but she contrived by its publication also to make an enemy of Josephine, by the facile manner in which the M. de Lebensei of the story prattled about divorce. Josephine was well aware of the fact that her husband's brother Lucien, who was French Ambassador at Madrid, was proposing at this time that Napoleon should divorce her and marry a young Infanta of Spain. Owing to this, the poor woman was living in a state of continual anxiety. Bonaparte's sisters at the same time were pointing out that as his marriage had been merely a civil one, without any religious ceremony, it would be the easiest thing in the world for him to get rid of the wife of whom they so greatly disapproved. In the novel, M. de Lebensei is the more closely drawn to resemble Benjamin Constant owing to the fact that he actually marries a divorced woman.

Now let us take a glance at Benjamin's marriage and divorce record. He married his first wife, Wilhelmina von Cram, in 1789, and divorced her five years later. He had a love-affair with the celebrated Madame Talma, who divorced her husband. Madame de Staël's separation from her husband amounted to a

divorce, and everyone knew of Benjamin's relations with her. He made a second marriage with Charlotte de Hardenberg, a lady who, according to his own confessions, had offered herself to him while young, when he had refused her. This lady's career was varied. She had first married M. de Mahrenholz, who had divorced her. She then married a General named Dutertre. When she wanted to marry Constant, who, after the lapse of many years, had made up his mind that he wanted Charlotte after all, Benjamin was obliged to buy her from her second husband, who divorced her in return for cash paid down.

Some, if not all, of these incidents in Benjamin's career were known, and hence it seemed the worst taste on the part of his open mistress to put him in a book in which, to quote one of the newspapers, he advocated divorces "as though he were prescribing pills."

When the above facts are taken into consideration, it becomes easy to understand the reasons that Josephine had for detesting a book according to which a divorce was such a simple affair.

There were additional causes of annoyance to Bonaparte in the book *Delphine* to those mentioned above, the chief of which was that the same M. de Lebensei who so praises divorce also expands upon the beauties and virtues of the Protestant religion, while systematically tearing to pieces the tenets and ceremonial of that Catholic faith which by his Concordat with the Pope the First Consul had just instituted as the religion of regenerate France.

The odd thing is that, with all this, the authoress of *Delphine* had the assurance to write in her preface that it was not a political book, and that in its pages she had concealed the opinions which she was proud to profess. At the end of it all, it must be admitted that the naïveté of the woman who could bring out such a book at such a time, and imagine that it would open for her the gates of Paris, was remarkable in the extreme.

By the publication of her remarkable novel, Madame de Staël had stirred up in France all the latent opposition to Bonaparte; by it new hopes were aroused, old dislikes revived. The First Consul knew by her letters to her friends, all of which were read in the post, that she was only waiting for the effect of her book as a bridge to return to France, but he had made up his mind that she should soon discover in that bridge nothing but a rotten plank. Nor was Bonaparte the only enemy that Germaine had aroused. All of her enemies combined to rise up in arms against her, and at the head of them was she whom Michelet has described as "a mass of sensibility and ink." This jealous woman, Madame de Genlis, wrote a book in parody of *Delphine*, and was further mean enough, in return for pecuniary reward, to constitute herself a spy upon Madame de Staël and report all her actions to the First Consul; and not only to report truly, but to exaggerate facts.

In Geneva, which by this time had been annexed to France, Germaine, had she but known it, was already under police surveillance. While making up her mind

finally to make a bold dash for Paris, she spoke very imprudently against Bonaparte at an inn to some English friends and a French gentleman. The latter was secretly arrested and carried off to France, where he was imprisoned; but beyond the fact that her foolish remarks were transmitted to Paris, no interference was attempted with Madame de Staël's liberty or actions.

At length Mathieu de Montmorency, who was at Coppet, and Germaine together wrote a letter to Joseph Bonaparte. In the body of the letter Mathieu told the First Consul's brother to expect him back in Paris soon, while in the postscript Madame de Staël added that she too might be expected very shortly, and that "he must do what he liked about it."

The letter to Joseph was sent from Geneva on August 10th, 1803, and by the middle of September Germaine was actually in France; not at Paris, but installed in a country house some few leagues away, the name of the place being Mafliers.

From Mafliers her intention was to make occasional expeditions to see what was going on in the city, while having her friends from Paris out to see her. It is evident that her good friend Joseph Bonaparte must have spoken up for her to his brother; indeed, it is certain that he had repeated to him a remark in the August letter. This was to the effect that she had "lost all taste for tempestuous conversations," that she had become so "sad, bored, and stupid" that she had nearly lost also any talent that she had ever possessed.

To back up this intimation that in future she was going to make of herself nothing but a kind of tame lamb, Germaine wrote a letter to the First Consul, asking him to allow her to remain quietly at Mafliers. He was at this time very much taken up with his great project for making a descent on England, and was preparing armies and flat-bottomed boats at Boulogne and other places in the north of France. At such a time he did not think it worth while to set people's tongues going by any harsh treatment of Madame de Staël, and therefore would seem to have accorded the woman who had attacked him so often the permission that she had demanded. This seems to have been a written permission, since we find Germaine writing her thanks in reply from Saint Brice, the home of her friend Madame Récamier, which was near Mafliers. In this reply Germaine makes Bonaparte a distinct promise : " I will live in peace at Mafliers."

Behold, then, a truce established, which might have developed into a permanent peace between the protagonists in a *piece à deux* which had already for nearly six years seemed to present nothing but the spectacle of a quarrel between a remarkable man and a distinguished and clever woman. With but an ordinary element of good luck, the rough asperities of the past might at this moment have been smoothed over, and Madame de Staël and Napoleon Bonaparte have become friends after all.

As, however, the poet Burns has so aptly told us : " the ways of mice and men gang aft agley," and, all unknown to Germaine, there was at this critical period

of her life a woman waiting to be avenged upon her. Avenged for what? Not for having stolen a lover: that was an everyday occurrence and, moreover, did not apply in the least, not because the woman happened to be twenty years the senior, but because she who was seeking for vengeance had already possessed a lover far more highly placed than any of the numerous train who throughout the whole of her lifetime hung on to the skirts of Madame de Staël, who never was sought by any of the Princes of the Blood Royal of France.

The woman was the Comtesse de Genlis, and the petty reason owing to which she wished for vengeance upon Madame de Staël was that by her literary renown she had thrown her own prior literary successes into the shade.

Stéphanie Félicité Ducrest married her husband, the Marquis de Sillery, subsequently Comte de Genlis, at the age of sixteen. She was already a remarkable girl, with musical tastes, and, although of noble birth, glad to earn a living by playing the harp in great houses before her marriage. Her husband, while he lived, was in the household of the Duc de Chartres, who became afterwards the Duc d'Orléans, known as Philippe Égalité during the Revolution. The intimacy between the Duc d'Orléans and the Comtesse de Genlis became notorious. By him she was the mother of at least one daughter, and was strongly suspected also of being the mother of that remarkably beautiful girl, the mysterious Paméla, who married the unfortunate Lord Edward Fitzgerald.

This royal prince having conferred upon his

favourite, Madame de Genlis, the title of " Governor " of his children, one of whom became King Louis-Philippe, she at first lived in his household at the Palais-Royal, despite the unavailing protests of the neglected Duchesse d'Orléans. Later she removed to another residence, taking her pupils with her, and early devoted herself to literary pursuits. Having been born in 1746, the Comtesse de Genlis had won for herself great and merited renown as a writer before Germaine Necker was out of her teens, and later, after having been compelled by the events of the Revolution to fly to Switzerland and Holland, she continued her literary efforts in exile, winning fame for her plays, novels, memoirs, and scandalous, satirical writings. The most renowned of these last was *The Dinners of Baron Holbach,* which work struck very hard and maliciously at the Philosophical party of the eighteenth century, from which Madame de Staël took her early ideas.

When Bonaparte became First Consul, Madame de Genlis returned from exile, obtained a pension from him, and was not ashamed to become his spy concerning events that went on in Society. Her principal novel was named *Mademoiselle de Clermont,* a book that appeared in 1802, but only to be put entirely in the shade by the wonderful success of Madame de Staël's *Delphine,* published at about the same time.

Long before the publication of her *Mademoiselle de Clermont,* Madame de Genlis had been enraged at the manner in which she had been cut out by M. Necker's brilliant daughter. She had passed for the cleverest

woman in Paris; her salon had been formerly that which was the most frequented by all the best of the old Society; to her had come the *savants*, the men and the women with brains—in fact, the Comtesse de Genlis had been at the top of the tree, whether social, artistic, or literary. Then, on her return to Paris, she had found her place occupied by another and more illustrious woman, one much younger than herself, in the person of the Baronne de Staël. Her vanity was bitterly offended, her spiteful instincts aroused against one whose name she could not bear to hear mentioned, unless it were by herself, to defame it. No sooner did *Delphine* make its appearance than Madame de Genlis posed as the defender of the public virtue, and noisily declaimed against the immorality of the novel. With reference to this, an amusingly epigrammatic remark was made by Madame de Rémusat, to the effect that when Madame de Genlis wished to define virtue, "she always spoke of it as though it were a discovery."

The people who knew of her past history could not, indeed, easily believe in the sincerity of her outcry in favour of morality, and smiled sarcastically at the vicious vapourings of the Comtesse.

It happened, however, that it was in the power of the jealous woman to do Madame de Staël an injury by tale-bearing, and she did not neglect it. It was through M. de Rémusat, the husband of the lady mentioned above, that the First Consul gave assistance to Madame de Genlis upon her return in a very impecunious condition from Holland, and a little later she was deputed to write to Napoleon fortnightly

letters concerning the scandal of the day or any other subject of interest. Thus she had the most ample opportunity of defaming her literary rival. It happened that a good many visitors were in the habit of going to Mafliers. Benjamin Constant had a country place close by, called Les Herbages, while Madame Récamier's Château of Clichy was also in the neighbourhood ; and, naturally, there was a good deal of harmless coming and going backwards and forwards to the houses of these intimate friends. The police, however, kept a constant watch upon Madame de Staël, but the Duc de Rovigo, originally known as Savary, who was the head of the Police at that time, distinctly mentions in his *Mémoires* that it was through no action of his that Madame de Staël was interfered with. Rovigo states that it was entirely owing to the devices of a literary rival that Germaine was ordered to leave Mafliers.

This rival was Madame de Genlis, who alarmed the First Consul by telling him that Madame de Staël was constantly paying secret visits to Paris, and, further, that the roads were continually covered with the crowds of visitors coming to her house. As a result of this act of feminine malignity, an order was received by Madame de Staël to leave France within twenty-four hours. She did not obey the order, but left Mafliers and went to stay with Madame Récamier at Saint Brice while awaiting the result of appeals that she made to Bonaparte through his brothers Lucien and Joseph.

Both of these good friends did their utmost on behalf of Germaine, but wrote that their efforts were

without success. In spite of her promises to keep quiet, she had not neglected both to write and say sarcastic things concerning the fleet of flat-bottomed boats with which the First Consul proposed to make his descent on England. Moreover, she had made a loud outcry upon the subject of the unfortunate English travellers ordered to be placed under arrest in France, upon the occasion of the breach of the Treaty of Amiens and the consequent resumption of the war with Great Britain. One cannot, therefore, feel much sympathy when reading the pitiable appeal made by Madame de Staël to Joseph Bonaparte, but is on the contrary astounded at the want of pride of the woman who could write as follows: "Only let me die in France, if but at ten leagues from Paris, and I will thank him; I will pray to him as to God Himself"!

Napoleon laughed, and told his brother sarcastically that he knew the woman, and that once the danger of the moment was past she would be the same as ever.

Germaine was undefeated. She wrote a letter to the First Consul, imploring in the name of her "respectable father," M. Necker, to be allowed a week in Paris, and, without waiting for the reply, returned to Mafliers. The reply came, in the shape of a very polite lieutenant of police, who invited Madame de Staël to remove herself forty leagues from Paris.

CHAPTER XV

RUPTURE WITH BONAPARTE

HAVING been instructed to handle Madame de Staël with kid gloves, the gendarmerie officer, whose name was Gaudriot, was not hard upon her, and even allowed her to go to Paris for three days, to make her monetary and other arrangements before leaving the country. As he had been selected as a man of known literary attainments, Germaine did not find the presence in her carriage of the urbane Gaudriot too irksome. She seems, on the contrary, to have enjoyed relieving her mind to this gentleman on the subject of the misfortunes likely to accrue to a distinguished *femme d'esprit* like herself.

Passing the Château of Saint-Brice, and leaving her guardian in the carriage, Germaine ran in to fling herself in floods of tears into the friendly arms of Juliette Récamier, who from that moment, according to her *Souvenirs*, commenced to feel herself in violent opposition to Bonaparte, and to long for the curtailment of his powers.

Present with her friend, Germaine found General Junot, the old comrade-in-arms and friend of the First Consul. Moved by the distress of Madame de Staël, the excellent Junot rushed off to Saint Cloud to plead her cause. He begged for her to Napoleon as though

for his own sister, with the only result of angering his old companion. "What is the woman to you?" demanded Bonaparte fiercely, while stamping on the floor. "I know her, I tell you. She will always be the same." In vain was it for Junot to attempt to reassure Bonaparte by saying: "This woman would become enthusiastic for you, my General, if only you would allow her. . . ."

He was cut short. "No, no! No more truce or peace between us! She has asked for it—let her suffer what she has brought upon herself."

If she had enemies, surely no woman had better friends than Madame de Staël, and during the next day or two, during which she calmly stayed in a house which she owned in the Rue de Lille in Paris, these friends piled in one after another upon the First Consul at Saint Cloud to plead for her cause.

The distinguished writer M. de Fontanes, Lucien Bonaparte, Joseph, and his amiable wife Julie, all came in turn, and when at last it became evident that no amount of begging would induce Bonaparte to rescind his sentence of banishment upon Germaine, the two latter invited her to come for a last visit to them at their Château of Mortfontaine, just outside Paris.

Meanwhile the friendly gendarme, Gaudriot, had been calling daily in the Rue de Lille to remind Madame de Staël that time was up and that she must really go, or he would be obliged, much against the grain, to adopt forcible measures. Accordingly she went off to Mortfontaine, where she felt that under the roof of

Joseph Bonaparte she would be at all events safe from arrest.

At last she left Paris in despair, and still not quite having given up all hope, waited outside the city at the village of Bondy for a message from Joseph, who had gone over to Saint Cloud for a final interview with his brother, to see if at the last moment he might not be induced to relent. Joseph sent, however, a message to say that all that he had been able to do for Germaine was to obtain for her permission to go if she liked to Prussia, instead of being compelled to bury herself in the dull retreat of Coppet.

There was evidently nothing more to be done; all suspense was over. Accepting her defeat, and taking Benjamin Constant with her, Madame de Staël drove off to Germany in the third week of October, 1803.

As she travelled along towards the Rhine, animated by the intellectual and consolatory conversation of Benjamin, Germaine recovered her spirits while making up her mind upon the future course that she proposed to pursue. In the twelfth chapter of her book, *Ten Years of Exile*, Madame de Staël tells us what her thoughts were as her carriage rolled on its way. "I desired," she says, "by the good reception that was promised to me in Germany, to lift myself up from the outrage put upon me by the First Consul, and I wished to oppose the friendly welcome of the ancient dynasties to the impertinence of that which was preparing to subjugate France."

She had for years wished to visit Germany, as the

home of poetry and philosophical thought. She had long since become interested in Kant, and now hoped to make the personal acquaintance of Schiller and Goethe, while visiting the various German Courts, which she hoped to interest in her quarrel with the First Consul while representing to them the tyrannous nature of her oppressor. Germaine was determined that she would take up the challenge that had been thrown down and injure the name of her opponent everywhere.

That of Madame de Staël was well known by reputation already in Germany, where she was soon to find many friends among the royal families, diplomatists and men of letters. Among all of these she was to preach her crusade against tyranny—not always fairly, but rather in a spirit of hatred which would entail conviction, while painting herself in the light of the sincere friend of liberty and of the countries that she visited, in which she declared that she wished to see that liberty maintained.

The result of the rupture between Napoleon and Germaine was to entail serious consequences, if not all at once, by degrees, and to injure the Corsican all over Europe. While armies were assembling and diplomats were conferring, the far-spreading influence of the slighted woman of letters was to unite in many directions a hitherto unknown love of liberty and national sentiment, to stir up a united Europe against an aggressive France.

Madame de Staël did not, however, turn her back on France without regret that she had not comported

herself in a way to be allowed to reside there in peace. This was evident from a letter which she wrote to the faithful Mathieu, in which she said: "I had no idea that I should suffer as I do; if I had foreseen it, I should have behaved differently."

How celebrated her name had already become soon became evident. At the town of Metz, in Lorraine, she was received with honour, even the Prefect joining in the fêtes offered to her, notwithstanding that he might well compromise himself by so doing. At Metz it was that Germaine met for the first time a man who had indirectly a considerable influence on her life, in the person of Charles de Villers. He was a French noble and an *émigré*, greatly interested in German life and literature, and it was through reading a book by Villers on Kant's philosophy that she had already been in correspondence with this officer.

For two weeks she remained at Metz, talking, and, it must be owned, often disputing with Villers concerning everything German. She got on well with him, but was considerably bored at finding him in company with a German married lady, for Germaine always preferred to have her male friends all to herself. As, however, Charles de Villers had settled in Metz on purpose to be near Dorothea von Rodde, Madame de Staël was unable to take the one without the other. She did not, however, neglect to write to Mathieu that she found "the intellectual and interesting Villers in company with a stout German woman, Madame von Rodde, whose power of attraction has not yet reached me."

Upon reaching the town of Mayence she met the great Goethe's mother, who wrote to her son in Weimar in a disparaging manner concerning Madame de Staël, who was pushing forward to meet the celebrated writer of *Faust* and *The Sorrows of Werther*. The good lady expressed herself as follows : " She weighed like a millstone round my neck. I avoided her on every occasion, declined all the parties to which she was invited, and breathed more freely when she went away. What could the woman want with me ? "

Germaine's first impressions upon crossing the Rhine were discordant and rather discouraging. " The coffee-rooms blackened with smoke, where woollen clothing was spread out to dry before iron stoves, offered no shelter from the obtrusive pianos." It seemed to her that the whole of the intellectual Germany of which she was in search was like this. There was poetry in the soul but no external elegance. It all seemed very crude to her after the beloved Paris from which she was banished by what she considered the tyrannical persecution of Bonaparte.

To make things worse for Madame de Staël, while she could read German, she could not speak the language, and consequently found herself greatly at a disadvantage.

Life assumed, however, a more rosy tint for the disconsolate traveller after her arrival at Weimar. This town, the capital of the grand duchy of Saxe-Weimar Eisenach, was at that time the centre of German thought and culture. It was the residence of

the Grand Duke Karl August and his very amiable wife, while Schiller, Goethe, and other literary celebrities lived either there or in the neighbourhood. The Grand Duke was himself a man of a very cultivated mind, and, what pleased Madame de Staël greatly, she found him not only an admirer of England but very much so of herself. At the little Court, in connection with which Goethe had some functions, she was received in the most friendly manner by the Grand Duchess Louise, and amid her very pleasant surroundings she soon began to regain courage. Goethe wrote at the time of Germaine's visit as follows: "She wishes to learn to know Weimar, moral, social, and literary; but she wants also herself to be known, and seeks therefore to set off the value of her own ideas, with which she seems desirous to imbue ours." What Madame de Staël was evidently chiefly anxious to do during her residence in Weimar was to extend the bounds of her own intelligence, while assimilating the best from the elevated German mind in the realms of poetry, philosophy, and literature. Above all, she sought to get at the hidden meaning of the thoughts that had animated the works of Schiller and Goethe.

At Weimar Germaine found a happy home-life at the Court, where she was made so welcome, while the whole place seemed to her impregnated with poetic thought and a simplicity that she sought for in vain later at Berlin or elsewhere in Germany. She was distressed, however, to find a blind submission among the dreamy inhabitants to the brutal force, so

subversive of liberty, already being exemplified by Bonaparte.

This she sought to counteract by her vigorous protestations in favour of liberty, with which, however, she did not greatly succeed in impressing Goethe, with whom she had much animated argument, as he frankly said that he did not look upon the value of liberty from the same standpoint as Madame de Staël. He spoke French well; but not so poor Schiller, who complained piteously that this dominating woman forced him to talk whether he would or whether he could. "I really have a hard time of it," he wrote to his friend Körner.

She endeavoured to impose her royal will on Goethe also. When he was absent at Jena, and in the bitter wintry weather did not want to undertake the mountainous journey to come to Weimar to see Madame de Staël, she wrote to him that if he did not come of his own accord she would come and fetch him. Grumbling, the author of *Faust* yielded—and came!

Germaine had plenty to say about liberty in the abstract, but she showed the German *savants* very plainly that she believed in herself ruling them despotically. An amusing instance of this was made evident when she was told that, knowing German so little, she was unable to understand Goethe's works properly. Impatiently tapping her foot on the ground, Madame de Staël replied: "Sir, I understand all that is worth understanding. What I do not understand is not worth reading!"

In spite of a certain clashing of intellects, the literary men of Weimar got on well with Madame de Staël on the whole, and Schiller wrote very nicely of her, saying: "She is charming throughout, and there is not a single strange or false or unhealthy trait in her." He added, however: "Of what we call poetry she has no perception," and also added: "The only defect is her extraordinary volubility. One must be turned into a listening machine to be able to follow her."

At this time Germaine de Staël was about thirty-six years of age and still full of personal attraction. Indeed, Goethe, who was from early youth a lover of the female sex, seems to have recognised this fact, since he mentions that she was just as well pleased to receive compliments on her physical charms as on her intellectual qualities.

It is, however, pleasant to be able occasionally to turn from the numerous men by whom all her life Germaine was surrounded, and their frequent comments upon Madame de Staël, to one of her own sex for a frank opinion.

One such critic, and a good-natured one, we find in a young lady named Henriette Knebel. She was the companion of Princess Caroline, the daughter of the Grand Duke of Weimar, and in a letter to her brother she says that she found the distinguished literary lady "very lively, good-natured and talkative, extraordinarily voluble, but clear and pleasant. She is a woman of the world, and mostly addresses herself to the most distinguished members of society, but is very

polite and friendly to everybody." In another letter, after mentioning that Germaine's "liveliness electrifies and delights the Duchess," Henriette Knebel adds: "There is nothing pedantic or priggish about her; she is healthy in all her cleverness. Madame de Staël's conversation is the most unusual talent I have ever come across—so gentle, yet full of power."

CHAPTER XVI

GERMAINE IN BERLIN

However "gentle and full of power" Henriette Knebel may have found the conversation of Necker's daughter, it is evident that both Schiller and Goethe got rather more of it than they desired. When the former was writing a play, for instance, he found it distinctly distracting, and we find him writing to his friend Körner: "My play takes up the whole of my attention, and now the devil brings me this philosophising Frenchwoman, who is the most active, combative, and voluble of all the human beings I have ever met But she is also the cleverest and most intellectual of women, or she would remain unnoticed by me." He adds: "She takes all the poetry out of me, and I only wonder how I can do anything at all."

We find also Goethe and Schiller talking over Madame de Staël, and while the former writes: "As I am now out of health and morose, it seems nearly impossible to carry on these eternal discussions," the latter replies: "She stays here three weeks longer. I fear she will realise from personal experience that we Germans in Weimar are also changeable people, and that it is well to know the right time to depart." Goethe cannot help having more than one dig at Germaine, with all her talk about liberty.

" Everyone," he says, " may easily have enough of it, if only he knows when to be satisfied and submit to circumstances." He further philosophises : " It is not liberty to ignore our superiors. It is liberty to honour a higher nature, for while we honour such we raise ourselves by our recognition that we too have and are worthy of a higher nature."

At length Madame de Staël left her literary friends in Weimar to pursue their avocations in peace, and proceeded to Berlin. There she was at once on friendly terms with all the Royalties, particularly so with the Prince Louis Ferdinand, a handsome and warlike young man of thirty, who was to be fated to die within a few years fighting against Napoleon.

The young and lovely Queen Louise was then the princess of all hearts in Berlin, and by her Germaine was received in the most distinguished manner. As though she too were, indeed, one of the great ones of the earth, the young Queen addressed her at a great Court ball as follows : " I hope, Madame, that you believe that we have good enough taste to be flattered at your arrival in Berlin. I was very impatient to know you."

What made matters easier for Madame de Staël in Prussia was that before her departure from France the friendly Joseph Bonaparte had written a letter warmly recommending her to the good offices of La Forest, the French Ambassador in Berlin. Although some of the German States were seething with intrigue against the First Consul, which was inspired by secret English emissaries, the French influence was still predominant

in Prussia at the time of Germaine's visit. She found the Court and society apparently given up entirely to amusement, unfitted for any spirit of high endeavour, and quite indifferent as to the danger of the overthrow of European institutions by the ambitious schemes of Bonaparte. With all the intelligence at her command, Madame de Staël set herself at once to work to combat this spirit of indifference. As it happened, fortune played into her hands owing to the cruel action of her enemy by his cold-blooded seizure, and subsequent murder at Vincennes, of that unfortunate Bourbon prince, the Duc d'Enghien.

German pride was deeply wounded by the manner of the arrest of the grandson of the Prince de Condé in the neutral territory of the Duke of Baden, while the English coterie in Berlin and the party opposed to France were thrown into a state of exultation that Napoleon should have committed a crime likely to cause him to be execrated in all countries.

Talleyrand is accused by many of having been the real author of the barbarous and illegal execution, concerning which Fouché did not hesitate to say that it was worse than a crime—it was a blunder !

The manner in which Madame de Staël was apprised of the tragic event was as follows. Before eight in the morning an officer on horseback galloped up to the house where she was lodging. In her *Ten Years of Exile* she expatiates upon the remarkable grace of the rider, and " his eyes flashing with an air of vengeance or death," as the Prince Louis Ferdinand briefly called to her through the window the news that the

Duc d'Enghien had been arrested, delivered to a military commission, and shot.

When Madame de Staël refused to believe the Prince, he replied: "Very well, I will send you the *Moniteur*, where you can read for yourself that 'the person named Louis d'Enghien' has been so murdered."

The Prince sent her the journal, with a note, which in his anger at the insult to one of Royal blood he signed, "The person named Louis de Prusse."

Madame de Staël reaped much of the sympathy felt for the unhappy Bourbon prince, for had she not made it clear to all whom she had met in Berlin that she also was the victim of the First Consul's barbarity? She now represented Bonaparte in the worst possible light, as a tyrant, and especially the enemy of women, "one who delighted to dishonour them by his remarks, without any regard to their quality or rank."

In the presence of the excited Prussian Court, Germaine gave full flow to her eloquence; her indignation was sublime and carried all with it. Above all, the young Queen Louise was carried away, and vowed vengeance upon the murderer. Her influence over her husband, the King, was paramount—to what lengths might she not lead him?

Now was the moment of Germaine's triumph. She had rejoiced already at the idea that when he heard of the manner in which she was fêted and received with honour everywhere Bonaparte must have felt angry, while regretting that he had not made more of her himself. She now rejoiced that by giving full

swing to her feelings of rancorous hate he would soon be obliged to feel the effects of her power, which, at all events, he must be compelled to recognise. All that she said, indeed, was reported to the First Consul, but he merely jeered on the subject of Madame de Staël and her successes at Berlin; above all, at her friendship with "that marvel of her sex, Queen Louise." With a sneer, Bonaparte remarked: "Of course, the Prussians are much finer fellows than the French." Further, he asked ironically how Germaine was getting on with her Prince Louis Ferdinand.

Judging by after events, Bonaparte was scarcely wise so greatly to despise his antagonist, the woman who would have liked to have been his lover and to have shared the world with him on equal terms; but save by shutting her up in prison, which he only once thought of doing, in what way could Napoleon have muzzled Madame de Staël?

It was not very long before, hearing of the serious illness of her beloved father, Germaine turned her face homewards, passing once more through Weimar. Before leaving Berlin she had, however, picked up an adherent who remained either in her household or at her disposition for the rest of her life. There were two brothers, *savants* and literary men, named Schlegel—August William and Frederick—both distinguished although still young. Wanting a tutor for her two sons, she applied to Goethe to help her, and through his friendly offices August William consented to go for a large salary and live with Madame de Staël in the proposed capacity. From that time forward "William,"

as we soon find her calling Schlegel, proved far more her tutor than that of her boys. He was also a very strong recruit in her war against Bonaparte, for this man of great erudition exerted his influence consistently to combat Napoleon in Europe, in the same way in which he always sought to promote the spirit of the German literature above that of France. Accompanied by Schlegel, Germaine reached Weimar, only to learn of M. Necker's death. She fell into agonies of grief, but Benjamin came back from Switzerland to console the poor woman in the greatest sorrow of her life.

CHAPTER XVII

QUARRELS WITH BENJAMIN

Poor old Necker had passed away at Coppet on April 10th, 1804, and his daughter had been uppermost in his thoughts during his last hours. With self-reproach, he accused himself of having by the publication of his book, *Last Views of Policy and Finance*, been the cause of the exile from Paris of his beloved Germaine.

While dying, he strove to right matters, writing a last letter to the First Consul and assuring him that, instead of persuading him to publish the book, Madame de Staël had sought to restrain him from sending it to the press.

Bonaparte paid no attention to this letter from a dying man. His sole comment was that Madame de Staël had every reason to regret her father, whom for that matter he had found to be only a person of very mediocre intelligence, eaten up by a sense of his own importance and knowledge of strings of figures.

A curious circumstance in the career of one so intelligent as Madame de Staël was that she seemed to have absolutely no perception of the fitness of things. Thus, just before the death of her father and at the very time that she was doing her best to injure Bonaparte at Berlin, she wrote once more to Joseph to ask him if he could not move his brother's heart to allow

her to return to Paris, or at any rate to the neighbourhood of Mortfontaine. Joseph Bonaparte was at the time in camp in the north of France, in command of a regiment which formed part of the army which was being prepared to invade England. He wrote most kindly in return to Germaine, telling her to have confidence in him, but adding that, if he could not succeed, nobody could. When, as might have been expected, he failed in obtaining the required permission, he sent to Madame de Staël letters of introduction to people in Italy, to which country she was talking of going, including one to his uncle, his mother's half-brother, Cardinal Fesch, at Rome.

In the month after Germaine's return to mourn her father at Coppet, the First Consul, by the immense majority of the votes of the people, was elected Emperor of the French (May 18th, 1804). The exile now hoped for an act of grace on the part of Napoleon, and that on the occasion of his approaching coronation by the Pope, who was to come for the purpose to Paris, she with all other exiles would be allowed to return to France. The foolish woman could not, however, keep her tongue quiet; above all, she could not keep her too easy pen from scribbling. She was bitterly sarcastic on the subject of the new French Court being established by the Emperor Napoleon at the Tuileries; she jeered, moreover, at the elevation by the Corsican of his brothers and sisters to the rank of princes and princesses, even going so far as to laugh at the new princesses, calling them the "bourgeoises of Ajaccio," and saying that they could not help splitting with

laughter upon hearing themselves addressed by their new titles of Royalty—they were too comic.

The witty sayings and writings of Madame de Staël were repeated from mouth to mouth in Paris, where there were already plenty of others ready to rail and sneer at the elevation of the First Consul and at the manner in which he showered titles of nobility in all directions.

The jeers Napoleon did not mind, for he soon found plenty of members of the oldest families in France ready to flock to his Court, around which, moreover, many of the old aristocracy hung in the hopes of obtaining well-paid posts. What he did not, however, appreciate was the openly expressed indignation of Germaine against the nobles of the old Monarchy who shewed themselves willing to incline themselves before the newly-risen star and her efforts to keep them from rallying to the side of the Emperor.

One of these nobles, who was apparently willing to accept a *rôle* at the Imperial Court, was Germaine's former lover, Comte Louis de Narbonne. She wrote him a furious letter, which was full of insulting remarks concerning the members of the new Royal family and reproaches of those nobles of the *ancien régime* who were base enough to accept their favours and posts under them.

The better to ensure the safe delivery of this very compromising epistle, Madame de Staël sent it from Switzerland by the hand of a gentleman whom she thought that she could trust. Unfortunately for her, the gentleman happened to be a spy in the pay of

Fouché, who had now for the second time become Minister of Police. Fouché read the letter, copied it, and then sent it on to the Comte de Narbonne, after having had it carefully re-sealed. It was when the Emperor read this copy that he became so angry that he wished to cause the writer to be imprisoned.

The astute Fouché argued, however, that it was better to leave Madame de Staël at large and read her letters than to lock her up and thus give people an opportunity of making an outcry on the subject of the cruel treatment of women. Napoleon saw the point of the argument, and especially that through Germaine's imprudent letters it would be possible to discover the names of those conspiring against him. In consequence he gave Fouché instructions not in any way to interfere with her liberty. The Emperor did not, however, confer upon the writer of the letter to Narbonne the favour that she hoped for upon the occasion of his coronation.

In no way other than by keeping her out of France did Napoleon now indulge what might have been considered a justifiable rancour against Necker's daughter. On the other hand, the Emperor behaved towards her in the most gentlemanly manner, giving direct instructions that all his agents in Italy were to behave with the utmost courtesy to Madame de Staël. His politeness went even further than this. After reaching Milan, where she was just after the time that Napoleon had crowned himself King of Italy with the Iron Crown of Lombardy, Madame de Staël wrote to his brother. In a letter to Joseph of June 14th, 1805,

she tells him that the Emperor had declared "that if she had been arrested by the Queen of Naples he would have sent 20,000 men to her aid."

Before starting on her journey to Italy there had been fearful scenes between Germaine and her lover Benjamin Constant. For long Benjamin had been tugging against the chain which bound him, although at heart it seemed as if he could really not do entirely without Madame de Staël's society, any more than she could do without keeping him at her beck and call. Benjamin pointed out, however, after the death of her father, that the time had come to regularise the situation between them, and therefore urged her to marry him. She refused unless allowed to keep her own name or if the marriage were kept secret.

In their quarrel Germaine even fell into convulsions. There had already been many similar scenes between the lovers. When the Baron de Staël died in 1802 Benjamin had represented that the time had come for a cessation of the equivocal position in which he and Germaine stood to each other. Not only did he himself wish for marriage, but his relations urged it upon him, and especially his faithful cousin and *confidante*, Rosalie Constant, who strove also to make Madame de Staël see the propriety of a regular union with Benjamin. The woman who professed such a passionate attachment for him was, however, too selfish to be willing to resign the name by which she was known. She wished expressly to have it agreed in any marriage contract that she should reserve before all Europe the name of Baroness de Staël, by which

she had become celebrated as a writer. Benjamin was piqued. Neither he nor Germaine had ever been true to each other, and, in the same manner as she had had her love affairs, he had indulged in various intrigues, notably with Julie, the divorced wife of the great actor Talma, and with a Mrs. Lindsay. Nevertheless, they had continued to be associated together publicly and privately for many years, constantly seeking each other out and depending upon one another for counsel, advice, comfort, or, as happened at the time of the death of M. Necker, consolation. Although already thinking of making another marriage in 1804, when Germaine's father died, Benjamin felt that he could not abandon her in the hour of her deep affliction, and flew back to her side in Weimar, to accompany her back to her desolate home at Coppet. When she proposed to go to Italy, although long since worn out by the wild scenes of jealousy and rage to which Madame de Staël treated him, Benjamin offered again to make the definite sacrifice of his independence and to become her husband. The only result was the refusal and bitter quarrel mentioned above. Although unwilling to marry Benjamin herself, unless on her own terms, Germaine was resolved not to allow the man whom she was still determined to hold in her thrall to make another existence for himself and marry another woman.

Such, then, was the situation, and it was painful enough, in all conscience. Nevertheless, Constant accompanied Madame de Staël on the road as far as Lyons when she started for Italy. Then he left her,

and with a joyful heart at feeling himself free once more flew back to Paris. It might have been imagined that the pair of lovers, or perhaps the term "associates" is more applicable, had now done with each other for ever. Nothing of the sort! They could not do without each other, and in the following year Benjamin Constant was once more back again with Germaine at Coppet, where he formed the chief member of the group of men with whom she constantly surrounded herself, and whom she encouraged in their literary activities and often helped with her money.

It is probable that there never was another such extraordinary association between two beings, each of a very high order of intelligence, as that between Madame de Staël and Constant. Upon one occasion, when Benjamin had fled on horseback from Coppet and hidden himself in his cousin Rosalie's house, we find Germaine pursuing him, throwing herself with loud agonised screams down on the staircase, her bosom all bare and her black hair flowing wildly over her shoulders! Nevertheless, not long afterwards we find the distraught lady indulging in a new amour with an Italian poet, to whom she writes as though he were the only man in the world for her. The episode with the poet Monti was but an interlude After her adoration for him Madame de Staël was quite ready to return for awhile to her Benjamin with a renewed zest.

As for Constant, notwithstanding all the fantasies of his senses or his heart, the real great love of his life was that for Germaine. It was the only complete one: something was wanting from all the others. He may

abuse Madame de Staël, fly from her—she none the less is the only being who responds to all the many sides of his nature. Even when he has voluntarily given her up, he infinitely regrets her; she alone fills his thoughts.

It is both interesting and enlightening to follow Benjamin's revelations of his true self in his *Journal Intime*. The celebrated Swiss publicist, Charles Bonstetten, and the attractive young Sismondi, who became a distinguished historian, were among the most intimate members of Madame de Staël's circle; indeed, the latter would appear almost to have lived at Coppet. One day when Germaine was away we find Benjamin writing: "To-day she is at Geneva. Bonstetten, Sismondi and I have dined at twelve o'clock, like schoolboys enjoying a holiday. Extraordinary woman! Her dominion over everything surrounding her is inexplicable and yet undoubted. Did she but know how to govern herself she could govern the world."

Speaking of Coppet, at a time when there is a breach and he is asked there no longer, Benjamin says: "I am seized by an extreme longing to go back there. To tell the truth, it is the only place where I feel intellectually and spiritually at ease."

In another place he laments that Madame de Staël will not be contented with mere friendship now that he has ceased to love her, and considers that love should no longer be expected now that he and Germaine are both approaching forty. He tells her that he is no longer capable of feeling love, whereupon there is a scene, and he writes: "I only withdrew this assertion

to soothe an outbreak of grief and passion, the sight of which frightened me."

Unhappy couple! The story of their passions makes but painful reading. Constantly in Benjamin's *Journal* one comes across some such sentences as: "A terrible encounter with Madame de Staël. Greatest excitement! Reconciliation impossible. Difficult to get away! Madame de Staël has again won me back."

Even after the pair have both married again, they continue to meet, to live under the same roof, to be intimate and to quarrel as before, while others are drawn into the fray. New storms constantly arise.

Upon one occasion, after Benjamin's marriage to his Charlotte, which for a long time he has concealed, Madame de Staël appears to him, "like a fury, dagger in hand." Charlotte is so upset when Benjamin is won back again that she attempts to poison herself, as Benjamin had also done once when staying at Coppet. Auguste, Madame de Staël's eldest son, challenges Benjamin to a duel, because Constant is determined no longer to remain with his mother.

Young Rocca, the officer who, after being Madame de Staël's lover and becoming the father of a son by her, is allowed to become, in secret, her second husband, is also drawn into the quarrels, and Rocca likewise challenges Constant to fight because of his disregard of the lady who is so much to them both!

It is an extraordinary story, perhaps the oddest thing concerning which is that Madame de Staël never resents Constant's action in embodying it in his romance *Adolphe*, which gives it all to the world.

CHAPTER XVIII

MADAME DE STAËL AND MONTI

MADAME DE STAËL'S friend, Joseph Bonaparte, might, if he had chosen, have become King of Italy shortly after his brother became Emperor, and she was hoping accordingly to meet him in Milan. By the decree of the Senate in 1804, the succession to the Empire had, in the absence of any children to Napoleon, been settled upon his elder brother Joseph and upon his younger brother Louis, the other two male members of the family, Jerome and Lucien, being cut out on account of their indifferent marriages.

Joseph, whose character was humane and agreeable, was none the less ambitious. Accordingly, he refused to accept the Italian Crown, preferring to retain his position as heir-apparent to that of France. Under these circumstances, Napoleon determined to take the Italian Crown for himself, although later, after Joseph had been Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Naples, he persuaded him to accept the throne of that country and, subsequently, that of Spain.

Although disappointed in not meeting her friend, his letters were useful to Germaine, who made her appearance in Italy with all the glory of a celebrity. She found that everywhere Napoleon was most popular,

being looked upon by the Italians as the saviour of their country from Austria.

Having been assured by Mathieu de Montmorency that the Emperor had said that she would be allowed to move about freely everywhere, for once Madame de Staël behaved herself with moderation. There may have been a bit of policy in this restraint, which she was, however, well advised to exercise, especially as she was anxious to obtain from Napoleon the restitution of the two millions of francs which M. Necker had lent to the Government of Louis XVI.

It is possible that the Emperor, during this period of apparent truce with his fair antagonist, would not have been averse to giving the order for the repayment of this sum to Necker's daughter if only he could have been sure of her.

Two millions were, however, a large sum to disburse to any lady, especially when one could not be certain if it would purchase her friendship or no. For the moment the Emperor, who had been approached by one, if not two, of his brothers on behalf of Madame de Staël, determined to be cautious in the matter of the repayment.

She, in the meantime, paid a visit to his brother Lucien at Pesaro, but secretly, as Lucien was now not on very friendly terms with the Emperor.

On the occasion of her visit to Milan, which she timed to take place after the completion of the coronation ceremonies, Germaine would appear to have visited the Empress Josephine, who spoke nicely about her to the Princess Lambertini, and also she there met

Talleyrand once more, who wrote to Paris that the lady whose early love he had been had every reason to be contented with her journey to Italy.

Her enthusiasm about Italy, or anything Italian except Monti the poet, was, however, limited. Madame de Staël found the people superstitious and devoid of any ardour for liberty; quite indifferent, moreover, if in falling under the rule of Bonaparte they had but exchanged one despotism for another. Everywhere she found too many priests, too many beggars!

The Italian sea interested Germaine, however, to such an extent that later on her little daughter Albertine remarked naïvely: "The only two things that mamma cared for in Italy were the sea and Monti."

Although when writing her romance *Corinne* Madame de Staël was able to make use of Italy as an admirable background for the novel, she was not when there imbued with any depth of artistic feeling. Her thoughts ran rather in political than architectural grooves, and that which she wished to see in Italy was rather an inclination to a revolution or a republic than ruins. The latter, she exclaimed, only reminded her of death. Nor had Germaine a good word to say for the pictures or the statues, but displayed her absolute want of the artistic sense by her sententious remark that "a beautiful thought or a fine sentiment would touch her a thousand times more than those beautiful feet or those beautiful hands."

Madame de Staël might have enjoyed Italy better as a field for artistic exploration had but her one-time lover, Camille Jordan, accompanied her. But on the

second occasion that she asked Camille to come with her to Italy he again failed her. Mathieu, the ever-faithful, was with her at Coppet just before her departure, accompanied by the unwilling Benjamin, to Lyons. Jordan was the friend of Montmorency, and Germaine wrote and urged him to come first to Coppet while Mathieu was with her there and then to accompany her on her journey to the South. In spite of his having been assured that he was expected, and being begged by Madame de Staël not to fail her, Camille Jordan showed himself distinctly wanting in sympathy, and listened not to the voice of the charmer. Germaine was not, however, left without male escort, as she took William Schlegel with her on her journey.

The poet Monti was at the time of her visit to Italy the natural successor to the better-known Alfieri, the lover of the wife of Charles Edward, the young Pretender. Alfieri died in 1803, and Monti came to the fore shortly after by his celebration of Napoleon's prowess at the battle of Marengo. After various vicissitudes, he was appointed under the Emperor as Poet Laureate to the kingdom of Italy, and he had already attained this official position when Madame de Staël, having made his acquaintance through an Italian friend, wrote and asked him to come and visit her at the inn where she was staying.

Monti had already sung in favour of republican institutions, and in later years he was to invoke the muse in praise of Austria; but in those days, when the poet was tuning his lyre in celebration of the Emperor, Madame de Staël, showing more caution than she

usually displayed, was careful to express herself in her letters to him with marked moderation. Doubtless she was influenced by the knowledge that while Italy was hailing Napoleon as its liberator it would be useless to expect a man in that liberator's pay to join in her hatred of the paymaster.

Madame de Staël was much attracted to Monti from the first, and she soon was writing to him as follows: "Your strength and your independence lie in your talent and in the masterpieces that it creates; social relations with the reigning powers may cease from one moment to another . . . your admirable genius only requires the support of an untarnished name. If you want to produce an independent work, come and stay with me at Coppet."

After a fortnight with Monti at Milan, Germaine wrote that it had become such a habit for her to spend her days with him that she must write to him in future. Write she certainly did, and in the warmest terms of mingled affection and adulation. In one of her letters to the poet Madame de Staël makes a strange comparison. She had previously been much entranced by the sight of Vesuvius in a state of eruption, and to Monti she expressed herself as follows: "I have had only four great pleasures in Italy: to have heard you, to have seen St. Peter's, the sea, and Vesuvius, with the reservation that you and Vesuvius might be counted as one and the same thing." Subsequently Monti accepted Germaine's invitation and came and stayed with her at Coppet.

While he was there, Benjamin Constant met the

poet and evidently approved of him, since, without the slightest trace of any feeling of jealousy, he writes of his handsome appearance and agreeable attributes. As to the sentiments of Monti for Germaine, we get a little glimpse in a letter from an Italian author named Ferdinando Arrivabene, who, after praising her up and saying that she has " the face of Ceres and the arm and hand of Venus," describes her habit of always holding in her hand a laurel twig, and toying with it, even at table. He adds : " We are all in love with her, especially Monti, who takes the lead."

This custom of Madame de Staël, of constantly holding a green twig in her hand and playing with it, is commented on by the Comtesse de Boigne, who says, a little maliciously, that she supposes that she does it the better to display her beautiful arm. It is evident, however, that it was a trick which she always indulged in, to hold and fiddle with some object in her fingers. Bollmann, the young Hanoverian doctor, who at her request saved the Comte Louis de Narbonne in Paris and accompanied him to England, gives an example of this habit. Having called upon Madame de Staël in London, she made him accompany her up to her bedroom, when, says Bollmann, " she called to her maid to come and undress her. At last we were alone, for the servants are as nobody according to French notions. I stood at one corner of the chimneypiece, dressed entirely in black, and beautifully powdered, hat in hand ; she at the other corner, with nothing on but her petticoat and chemise, rolling a bit of paper in her fingers, without which she cannot exist. She

gets up with it in the morning and goes to bed with it."

This habit of receiving gentlemen in her bedroom when she was dressing or undressing was as constant with Germaine as that of rolling paper or a twig in her hand. The straitlaced people of Geneva were terribly exercised in their minds about it, as also at her custom of calling all her male friends by their Christian names. She, however, snapped her fingers at the inhabitants of Geneva, as she did at public opinion everywhere, and, accordingly, whenever it suited her, Germaine received her male friends not only in her bedroom, but without taking the trouble to rise from her bed.

Madame de Staël ended her Italian visit in June, 1805, when she returned to Coppet. There, although numbers of her friends crowded to see her, she was oppressed with melancholy ; for her heart was in Paris, and there she could not go.

CHAPTER XIX

GERMAINE, FOUCHÉ, AND THE EMPEROR

It is not to be supposed that Germaine had been long back in Switzerland before she sent to ask leave to return to Paris, for she soon did so, giving as a reason the necessity of her presence in order to prove her claim to her father's two millions.

The Emperor was at the time at the camp at Boulogne, preparing to invade England. He found time, however, to think about Madame de Staël, and to write to Fouché that he would be an imbecile if he allowed her nearer than forty leagues to Paris. After complaining that she was continually meddling with French affairs at Geneva, he said to Fouché: "Let her friends know that she is to stay at forty leagues. I must keep all elements of discord at a distance from Paris. It is not possible that when I may be perhaps a couple of thousand leagues away, at the other side of Europe, I should leave the field open to bad citizens to agitate my capital."

Not long after this, being compelled to give up his idea of a descent on England, owing to his Admiral, Villeneuve, being cooped up in the harbour of Cadiz, Napoleon broke up the camp at Boulogne and marched off to make his famous surprise attack on Austria.

While smashing the Austrians at Ulm, while

capturing Vienna, while crushing both the Russians and the Austrians together on the ice at Austerlitz, in all his wonderful military combinations and manœuvres, Napoleon never forgot to keep a watchful eye upon the feminine manœuvres of Madame de Staël. His actual watchdog for the moment was the Prefect of the Department of the Leman, which included the now French territory of Geneva. He was the excellent M. de Barante. While Germaine was always trying to circumvent this good-natured official, she contrived to make a complete conquest of his son Prosper, whom she added to the list of her adorers. Prosper de Barante was at this time about twenty-three years old. He was a young fellow of literary tastes, which were developed by the encouragement of Madame de Staël, who saw a good deal of him later in France and elsewhere. Prosper obtained various posts under Napoleon and later became a shining light in the party known as the *Doctrinaires*. M. de Barante, the father, was a gentleman of distinction, who had in the days before the Revolution been employed under the Bourbon *régime*. He had known M. Necker, and therefore was on visiting terms with Necker's daughter, whose movements he was ordered to watch and control. It was rather an invidious position for M. de Barante, entailing that of accepting the hospitality of Germaine, but he was nevertheless, while occasionally a guest at Coppet, both puzzled and interested by Madame de Staël. M. de Barante could not understand why Germaine should appear to be so interested in the literature of other countries, such as

England or Germany, while almost entirely disregarding that of France. Germaine, however, won the Prefect over to a great degree, so that in his reports concerning her he represented her as being very circumspect in her words and actions.

With her time taken up with literary pursuits, such as the writing of *Corinne*, with her house crowded with friends and the evenings given up to amateur theatrical representations, often of a very high order, it is difficult to understand why at this period Madame de Staël should have suffered so from melancholic depression and boredom. It seemed quite inexplicable to her friend, the Vicomte René de Châteaubriand, when he formed one of the intellectual group surrounding the hostess of Coppet, and he frankly expressed himself to her on the subject, taking her to task, and telling her that she had got everything necessary for happiness.

Châteaubriand envied Germaine her fine château and her beautiful lake, her opportunity of leading a peaceful and regular life in comfort ; he only wished that fate had cast his lot on similar pleasant lines. He told Madame de Staël that, while he was only a humble gnat, without even a little hole in a tree to hide himself in, she was in the happy position of the bee, with a comfortable hive to dwell in and a good supply of honey for the winter.

Germaine, however, snapped her fingers at the brilliant author of *Atala*, with his "regular and peaceful life," the very thing that she most abhorred. Paris and plenty of movement were more to her than all the beehives and honeycombs of lovely Switzerland.

Her book *Corinne* was all but finished, and she longed to be where she could, better than from her retreat at Coppet, prepare the minds of people for the reception of the novel. By the middle of April, 1806, Madame de Staël was off to France, taking with her William Schlegel and her two younger children, and settling at Auxerre, forty-three leagues from Paris. All her old friends were once more working in her interests : Madame Récamier, Mathieu, Junot, Constant, Joseph—every one of them busily employed in begging the Emperor and those around him on behalf of the exile, who had hired a fine country house named the Château de Vincelles.

The country was soon too much for her ; it got on her nerves; while Schlegel also could not stand the bucolic existence. They moved into the town of Auxerre, but Germaine found it but a desert containing nothing in the world to interest her. Oh, for Paris ! Such a life was enough to kill one with melancholy! Letter after letter poured upon the friends in Paris. " For heaven's sake, save me ! Get me out of this ! "

In the meantime, there was plenty of excitement brewing. Benjamin had not travelled to Auxerre fast enough. He had delayed on the way—he said that it was to see his father. A rod was ready waiting in pickle, and when at last he arrived it descended upon him with all its sting.

Unfortunately poor Benjamin could not bring good news with him. He writes concerning his reception as follows : " The fire is in all the timbers—the news from

Paris is bad, the master is inexorable. Thus I suffer the consequences!"

Poor unhappy scapegoat! these consequences seem to have been somewhat terrible. Germaine was absolutely without restraint. "In the evening," says he in his *Journal*, "a mad scene! Fearful, horrible, senseless! Atrocious expressions! Either she is crazy or I am mad. How on earth will it all end?"

Glad to make his escape, Benjamin flies to Paris—stirs everybody up once more. The Emperor meanwhile knows all that is going on, and laughs heartily about it. All the gossip concerning Madame de Staël reaches him regularly, besides which he has the resource of reading her letters to her friends and their answers, which are unsealed and copied in the office known as the Black Cabinet.

No good news coming, Madame de Staël goes almost wild, and for about six months tries to relieve her anxiety by dashing about the country in post-chaise from one place to another, always being followed by a regular suite as though she were a queen. She goes to Blois, to Rouen, causing a sensation wherever she appears. However, being deeply occupied with her new and passionate affection for Prosper de Barante, she commits no overt act of folly, and the Prefect of the district reports very favourably upon her.

The result is that Fouché, the Minister of Police, at length sends word to Germaine that she may approach Paris to a distance of only twelve leagues, and she immediately moves to the Château d'Acosta, the house of a friend. There, in a little better spirits, she finishes

her novel *Corinne* in peace, and is able to supervise its printing and correct the proofs.

This move to her friend M. de Castellane's house, which was near the town of Aubergenville, took place at the beginning of the year 1807, when Napoleon was at a distance from France at the head of his armies in Prussia. It would seem as if in permitting Germaine to approach closer to Paris Fouché had acted entirely upon his own responsibility, and certainly not in accordance with the views of his master, who had written a month earlier telling him not to allow "that intriguing rascal of a Madame de Staël" any nearer than forty leagues.

The Emperor could not, however, rely upon his arch-spy Fouché, and kept his own spies spying upon him, as he well knew his tricky nature and habit of trying to have a foot in everybody's camp at once. Thus he was aware of his friendly ways with and semi-protection of Madame de Staël, even while he was watching her and reading her letters. Also Napoleon knew when Fouché was trying to deceive him, and wrote to tell him so and confound him with facts. Germaine, trying to encroach a little on the permission given her, early in March, 1807, bought a property called Cernay only ten leagues from Paris, and was actually preparing to go and live upon it when prevented by the Prefect of the Department of Seine-et-Oise. After this attempt to steal a few miles, she was warned that she must retire once more at the beginning of April to a distance of forty leagues.

This order she evaded, with specious excuses, such

as that she had no money and that her daughter Albertine was unwell. She said, however, that she would be able to retire from the Château d'Acosta on the twenty-fifth of the month. In consequence, two letters, written by the Emperor on the two following days, April 18th and 19th, 1807, were received by Fouché. Both concerned the disobedient woman, and the second one was very angry. In Prussia, where he was, a letter from Germaine fell into his hands. It was evidently to one of the enemies of France in that country. This letter the Emperor forwards to the Minister of Police, with the remarks: "You will see by this letter what sort of a good Frenchwoman we have got to deal with! She would, if she could have managed it, have done anything to see the Prince Louis the bitter enemy of our Monarchy. To-day she is making up to the great. To-morrow she is a patriot or a democrat! It is difficult to contain one's indignation with this creature. And, with it all, she is ugly to boot. Let her go off if she likes with the friends of Prince Louis. I do not inform you of all the projects made by this ridiculous coterie in case they had the happiness to hear that I had been killed—a Minister of Police ought to be aware of all that. All that this miserable woman merits from me is that I leave her in her Coppet, with her Genevese and her Necker House."

On April 20th, the Emperor writes concerning Germaine again, this time to a gentleman who has written to excuse himself for his relations with the recalcitrant lady. This letter contains the sentence: "Every day I acquire fresh proofs that one cannot be

more evil than this woman, who is the enemy of the Government, and even of that France without which she pretends not to be able to exist."

Meanwhile Fouché is shielding Madame de Staël, and has even ventured to write to plead on her behalf. In his reply, after reproaching the Minister of Police for his weakness, the Emperor tells him that she is to go to the Department of the Leman, in which is Geneva, and there remain. Napoleon, however, qualifies this order by adding: "For that matter, I leave her the liberty to go abroad if she likes, and when there she is free to write just as many libels as she chooses."

Fouché has concealed the fact that Madame de Staël, after actually entering Paris, has remained there; indeed, he has reported that she has left for Switzerland; but the Emperor knows better, and writes back on May 7th in a sarcastic tone: "I see by your bulletin of April 27th that Madame de Staël has left for Geneva. I am sorry that you should be so ill informed. Madame de Staël was on the 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, and 28th of the month, and probably is still, in Paris. She has had many dinners there with people of letters. If her head had not been filled up with a lot of illusions, all this underhand dealing would never have occurred and she would have quieted down."

Napoleon continues to the effect that it is not really a kindness to Madame de Staël to encourage her with the vain illusion that she will be allowed to live in Paris, as to do so is only likely to expose her to disagreeable scenes, as he will give the gendarmerie instructions to look after her.

Germaine "would have quieted down"! Vain hope on the part of the Emperor, for never would she quiet down where he was concerned for so long as she lived. Moreover, all the time that she was agitating people's minds against him she was not ashamed to ask him favours.

Napoleon's letters to Fouché contain a distinct reproof, but it must have been a bitter pill to him, while in the middle of an arduous and bloody campaign, to discover that he could not trust his Minister of Police in Paris to tell him the truth. For the information that he conveyed in his ironical letter to Fouché was correct. Madame de Staël not only had been in Paris, enjoying herself thoroughly, but was there still when the Emperor wrote that he suspected such to be the case.

That he had cause to be anxious of the state of affairs in France at this period there is no doubt, for there was secret discontent in Paris accentuated by fear for the results of the campaign. The conscription which was being enforced was most unpopular, and there was an outcry concerning it throughout the country. At this time one like Madame de Staël could do a great deal of harm, and we will quote one more sentence from a letter from the Emperor to Fouché which shews that he knew she was not by any means to be trusted and had been agitating in France.

On May 11th, 1807, after informing Fouché that Madame de Staël had written him a muddled-up, pretentious letter of six pages, he remarks: "If I gave you in detail all that she has done at her country house

during the two months that she has been there, you would be astonished; for, although at five hundred leagues from France, I know better what is going on there than the Minister of Police" ! The Emperor was sure of his facts, and he knew Madame de Staël to be at the head of the party only waiting for him to lose a battle to cause his overthrow. Decidedly it was wiser to keep her out of France !

CHAPTER XX

WHAT NAPOLEON THOUGHT OF "CORINNE"

NAPOLEON was doing some hard fighting in Prussia at the time that he was so much concerned about Madame de Staël, the bloody battle of Eylau, in which the Prussians and Russians lost twenty thousand men and the French over ten thousand, having been won by him in the early part of 1807. After that great encounter and the retreat of the defeated, but not crushed, allies to Königsberg, spirits were very much agitated in France, owing to rumours of the advance of immense new Russian armies. Reports of the disturbed state of Paris reaching the Emperor, he took all means in his power to restore public confidence, writing to his sisters to give a series of fêtes, and to Fouché, making light of the reports of enormous French losses which had reached the capital. In particular, he ordered Fouché to keep under surveillance General Augereau, whose troops had been cut to pieces at Eylau and who had returned to Paris in a very bad humour. The Emperor knew that there were many in Paris who were only too desirous to hear of his defeat and to take advantage of any bad news to stir up once more the revolutionary spirit in France. At the head of these ill-wishers was Madame de Staël, but she and all her backing were disappointed, as what they would have

considered the good news of a disaster to Napoleon's armies never arrived to aid them in their plottings.

There were, however, jealousies in Paris in all directions, and among the old Jacobins, the old Moderate party, the old aristocrats of the Royalist party, and many of the Generals, old and new, there was alike a simmering of discontent. Under such circumstances, the Emperor was only too well aware of the fact that he had to dread the disturbance of public opinion that might be created by a master-mind such as that of Necker's irrepressible daughter. Thus, while conducting great military operations at a distance, he felt the necessity of keeping an eye on Paris and of eliminating such dangerous elements from its vicinity. Accordingly, to Fouché were transmitted instructions that admitted of no misunderstanding, and Madame de Staël was compelled to start on the return journey to Switzerland once more.

Germaine made her departure from Paris in a leisurely manner, for her book *Corinne* had just made its appearance, and she strove to dilly-dally as long as possible in the neighbourhood of the capital in order to reap any available glory from the success that she anticipated from her publication.

Turning over the leaves of *Corinne* to-day, the reader is apt to be overcome by an immense feeling of boredom; indeed, it becomes a struggle to read the book through. It is very long, and full of interminable dissertations on Rome and its sights which might have come out of a present-day guide-book; talks also on politics and the aspirations for freedom in

Italy which are the ideas of Madame de Staël herself. The plot is very slight, but while the heroine Corinne is, of course, incomparable, as representing the authoress, with all her marvellous genius and power of attraction, the hero, Oswald, Lord Nelvil, is at best an ungrateful stick, though meant to represent all the finest attributes of the English gentleman.

The reader of the year 1807 did not, however, look upon the pages of *Corinne* with the eye of to-day, and was able to read much into the lines of the book which is hidden to those readers nowadays not versed in the history and politics of Europe at the time of its publication. As a consequence, *Corinne* was a success, not only in France, but in other countries, where it was read with avidity. Universal curiosity prompted people everywhere to obtain Madame de Staël's last work, and thus, in spite of the continuance of the war with France, copies of *Corinne* very soon found their way to London, Edinburgh, and more remote parts of Scotland.

Germaine de Staël never wrote anything without political intention, and the underlying intention of *Corinne* is to bait Napoleon. She succeeds in getting at him in several ways, by her exaggerated praise of the English, whose intrigues were at that time stirring up the different countries of Europe against him, and by her representation of the lightness and frivolity of the French nature.

Of this she exemplifies two instances in *Corinne*, in the French characters the Comte d'Erfeuil and M. de Maltigues.

The former, a good fellow at heart, is frivolity personified, while distinctly amusing in the blindfold manner in which he runs down everything that is not French, whether in the way of the stage or literature. He finds Shakespeare "monstrous," and, when going to reside in Italy with Lord Nelvil, gravely informs that serious gentleman that "the study of the Italian tongue has not entered into my scheme of work." The Comte d'Erfeuil, however, has taken "two lessons in Italian," with which he expresses himself as being well satisfied, and on the strength of which he reports to his friend Oswald a long Italian conversation in which Corinne has spoken in glowing terms of the Englishman.

M. de Maltigues is another sort of Frenchman, one of the cynical, selfish variety, one in whom the critics were pleased to see a presentation of Talleyrand, whom it will be remembered figured as Madame de Vernon in Germaine's previous novel, *Delphine*.

De Maltigues is well drawn; he possesses a witty tongue and is pithy in his selfish remarks. Lord Nelvil has been involved in an intrigue with this gentleman's cousin, Madame d'Arbigny, and considers it his duty to marry the lady, whereupon Maltigues argues: "One must not sacrifice oneself. As for me, I do not recognise any circumstance when to do so is necessary; with a little dexterity one can get out of anything; cleverness is the queen of the world." Discussing honour and honest people, he comments: "The only difference in the world is between those birds caught in the net and those clever enough to get out of it."

When to this the honourable Oswald replies with

some virtuous platitudes on the subject of " reverses honoured by well-thinking people," Maltigues answers ironically : " Shew me your well-thinking persons, who will console you for your troubles by their courageous esteem ; it seems to me, on the other hand, that most persons who call themselves virtuous will make excuses for you if you are lucky, and love you if you are powerful."

Continuing the argument, Lord Nelvil praises up the virtue in man which serves to be of use to others. At this remark M. de Maltigues jeers, with the reply : " Virtue! Virtue! That is a word for the vulgar, which the augurs are unable to use between themselves without laughter."

Before bringing out her book, Germaine had received a hint from the Minister of Police to the effect that it would be as well if in the preface she were to make some comment upon the glorious epoch through which France was passing, employ some expression of satisfaction at the recent great victories by which Napoleon had rendered the Empire paramount in Europe.

Should she do this, Madame de Staël might, it was hinted, even yet find her wishes realised—the past where she was concerned might be forgotten.

The hint was wasted on Madame de Staël. She was not going to have it said of her that she had stooped to flatter the Emperor in any way. But, with her usual inconsistency of conduct, at the same time that she refuses to say a word for France or Napoleon, she wishes to have her book commended to the

Emperor by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Her friend Gérando is his secretary, and to him she sends *Corinne*, while telling him to ask the Minister to write to Napoleon about it and praise it up. At the same time, she wishes the Emperor's attention called to " the moderation that she has displayed " in not having allowed her pen to run in the preface on the subject of the glories of the day, for which France is indebted to him alone. On the top of this, Germaine's self-sufficiency is so great that she actually thinks that the Emperor will be so delighted at her display of talent in writing *Corinne* as to annul his orders of exile against her.

What Napoleon actually thought about the book we know, for we can see it for ourselves in the eighth chapter of the third volume of the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*. In his exile he was making a second attempt to read the book through, for he had tried to do so years before in vain. The description of Corinne the heroine was exactly that of an idealised Madame de Staël, depicted by herself. " Her arms were of a dazzling beauty, her height tall, her figure somewhat robust after the fashion of the Greek statues, her glance was inspired." She was full of sensibility, of gaiety, of grace, of depth of character, of justness, of exaltation, of love of glory. Even the " modesty " of Corinne was mentioned; and this last attribute in connection with a description of all the other charms that his enemy flattered herself she possessed was probably the last straw. Napoleon could stand no more. " Oh," he exclaimed, " I see her, I hear her,

I feel her! I want to fly from her, and—I fling the book from me!"

The whole spirit of the book, with its constant appeal to liberty, to enthusiasm, was distasteful, for it was intended as an appeal for the foundation of a different form of government to that organised by the Emperor in France. In depicting the characters of the Comte d'Erfeuil and M. de Maltigues, Napoleon recognised also that Madame de Staël was trying to have a dig at him. For the inference was plain—that it was just cynical, self-seeking or frivolous Frenchmen of that class that the Emperor was in the habit of employing.

CHAPTER XXI

MADAME RÊCAMIER'S LOVE-AFFAIR

When Germaine returned to her Swiss home she was in the full glory of her renown. She might in times past have repeatedly succeeded in making herself notorious; by *Corinne* she became famous. She filled up her château with men and women, among the latter being the beautiful Juliette Récamier, whose first visit it was to Coppet; while the people from Geneva and travellers from abroad vied with one another in their anxiety to pay homage to the celebrated Madame de Staël.

With the house filled to overflowing, the time was passed pleasantly with the acting of plays, both tragedies and comedies, some of them being from the pen of the hostess herself or of that of some of her clever guests.

Madame Récamier, the most lovely woman in France, passed as being one absolutely devoid of passion; she was, however, an arrant coquette. While man after man courted her, and some even wasted years of their lives in her pursuit, the fair Juliette never sent one of them away. She kept them at her feet, playing with them, giving a little crumb of comfort by way of a promise from time to time, so that she should not lose their adoration—but yielding nothing more. Among those who nearly went crazy about Madame

Récamier was Benjamin Constant, while the virtuous Mathieu de Montmorency was also one of her most attached, but, needless to say, discreet, friends. In later years, when they had both grown old, René de Châteaubriand became her intimate friend, and eventually proposed to marry her, her husband, who had been three times her age, having been long since dead, but Juliette declined to change her condition at such a late period. Consequently the intimacy continued on the old conditions until the pair of elderly lovers died, within a year of each other.

Juliette, who had been married at the early age of fifteen, was still young at the time of her visit to Coppet in 1807, while her beauty was enough to turn any man's head. It now occurred to the scheming brain of Germaine to make use of her lovely friend as a new means of annoying Napoleon, and she did not scruple to do so. Her former admirer, the handsome Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, had been recently killed at the battle of Saalfeld, in Saxe-Meiningen; he had, however, a younger brother, Prince August.

This young prince, twenty-four years of age, had had the misfortune during the battle of Prentzlau, in Prussia, to tumble into a bog, whence he was hauled out and made prisoner by the French.

After having been detained for a time in France, first at Nancy and then at Soissons, Prince August of Prussia was so fortunate as to obtain his release by the Emperor's order, with the permission to go to Italy. On his way to Italy he passed through Geneva—a stone's-throw from Coppet. What, then, more natural

than that it should enter the young man's head to go and pay a visit to the châtelaine of the famous château, whose acquaintance he had doubtless already made at Berlin.

The delight of Germaine was great to welcome the young man under her roof ; he was proud and noble in appearance, and, moreover, he possessed the greatest of merits in her eyes, for had he not actually been in arms against Napoleon, experienced his barbarities in one or two prisons ?

Having become installed under the roof of Madame de Staël, Prince August found himself rubbing elbows with Madame Récamier at every corner of the long corridors and passages, while her brilliant eyes seemed to encounter his at every turn of his head. A past-mistress in the art of love-making such as Germaine was not long in perceiving that for once there seemed to be something more than the usual coquetry in Juliette's alluring attitude ; while as for the Prince, it was evident that he had completely lost his head, and his heart to boot. Madame de Staël determined by every means in her power to help on the budding *amour*. She gave every facility of private meetings to the handsome and attractive couple, with the result that, for the first time in her life, Juliette's passions became aroused. She let herself go unreservedly ; she loved, and gave her heart without restraint to the princely enemy of her country and her Emperor.

Madame de Staël was in the seventh heaven of delight, and happier still when she learned from the confidences of her friend that, rather than ever be

compelled to relinquish the lovely creature whom he had won, the Prince of Prussia was determined to make of her his wife.

Prince August was, naturally, one of the bitterest enemies of the tyrant of Europe, the man who even at this moment, after humiliating the unhappy Queen Louise, was completing the degradation of Prussia by the Treaty of Tilsit.

Madame Récamier was so far gone in her unrestrained passion for her lover that she had actually given him a written promise of marriage. The Prince had also signed a similar promise. This paper, which is worded in extremely passionate terms, is still in existence among the papers of Madame Récamier.

For a woman who is already married and has no cause of complaint against her indulgent husband to say that she will espouse another is one thing : to carry out her promise is another. M. Récamier was written to and asked to consent to a divorce. The banker had recently had very great losses, and it would appear that, while not actually refusing his wife the relief that she sought, he nevertheless pointed out to her that, since she had found him good enough for her in the days of his prosperity, she would be playing him a shabby trick in deserting him now that the evil days had fallen upon him.

As a result of this reply, very much to the disappointment of Madame de Staël, the enamoured Juliette gave up her project of marrying the Prince, with whom, however, her intrigue continued for a couple of years, until 1809.

Photo E.N.A.

MADAME RÉCAMIER

From the picture by F. Gérard

[*Facing p.* 186

Madame Récamier, moreover, continued to see her Prince August even after that date, and we find Benjamin Constant very jealous of him as late as the year 1816, and writing to abuse him to Juliette, although at an earlier date he had written in the most complimentary terms concerning him. That, however, was before Benjamin had himself fallen under the spell of the siren.

From a perusal of the pages of the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, it becomes evident that Madame de Staël in promoting this *amour* was completely successful in her object of irritating the Emperor. Napoleon became angry with her when, later, by reading the copies of letters which passed between Juliette and Prince August, he learned all that was going on, and he easily understood the veiled political allusions in these letters. He particularly railed against Germaine for weaving the intrigue and for teaching the young Prince what he terms bad principles.

Napoleon's anger included the Prince himself, and after August had returned to Berlin, which was then ruled by a French governor, in the person of the Maréchal Victor, the Emperor wrote about him from Venice. Victor had been keeping an eye on the Prince's movements and had reported that he had been behaving badly in Berlin.

To this Napoleon's reply was distinctly amusing, with its threat concerning Madame de Staël. It ran as follows : " It does not surprise me to read what you tell me of the bad conduct of Prince August of Prussia, for he has got no brains. He passed his time making

up to Madame de Staël at Coppet, and how could he learn anything there but bad principles? Do not miss him. Tell him that at the first bad thing that he says you will arrest him and lock him up, and further, that you will send him Madame de Staël to console him! There is nothing so flat as these Princes of Prussia!"

In a subsequent letter to the Maréchal, the Emperor again dwelt on the bad lessons that Madame Récamier's Prussian lover had learned from Madame de Staël. He was also apparently angry with the Prince for his boastfulness, which was, he said, common to many other officers of his nation, and for which they stood in need of correction. Napoleon goes on to say: "He accuses the Prince of Hohenlohe, the Duke of Brunswick, General Blücher, the Prussian army, the King. Everyone has done badly with the sole exception of himself. Nevertheless, the one outstanding incident in his military career is that he was made prisoner in a marsh. There is no wit, and little generosity, in running down old Generals, the victims of the imperious circumstances of war. Of course, one cannot blame Prince August for having been made prisoner, that is often the fate of the bravest; but when one has received no wound one would do better to justify oneself than to make accusations. This young Prince still has need of the counsels of his respectable father and worthy mother. They would be far better for him than the lessons of the bad lot whom he met at Coppet, and the evil things that he heard said there."

It was only a few days before the Emperor had

written these letters, in which he so playfully suggested sending Madame de Staël to console Prince August in prison, that he had once more shown a kindly disposition in his treatment of the woman whom he had every cause to dread and dislike.

Germaine wished once more to go to Germany, especially to visit South Germany and Austria. Having given as a reason for her journey that she desired to put her second son Albert in a school where he could learn German, the friendly Prefect, M. de Barante, forwarded her request to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Paris, and M. de Champagny, with whom was Gérando, Germaine's intimate friend, sent it on to Napoleon. The Emperor's instructions, sent in reply to the Minister, were that all the representatives of France in foreign countries were to be told to give their protection to Madame de Staël. Napoleon was not, however, aware of the fact that Germaine's real intention was to place her boy in an Austrian military academy.

CHAPTER XXII

GERMAINE AND GENTZ

THE minds of people in Austria were, in the year 1808, in a condition of revolt against any French influences whatever. Therefore, when the celebrated Madame de Staël suddenly made her appearance in Vienna she was received with open arms. For the Viennese fell into the natural error of imagining from the tone of Germaine's books that she was as opposed to France as she was to its ruler. This is not surprising, especially as her course of action did indeed amount to being anti-French. In any case, her antagonism to the Emperor was known, and as the enemy of Napoleon she was warmly welcomed upon her arrival in the middle of January.

Although, as mentioned above, the Emperor had instructed M. de Champagny to the effect that the French agents were to be obliging everywhere in their treatment of Necker's daughter, that was not to say that her movements were not to be watched by the Imperial police. As a matter of fact, constant track was kept of her actions, notes concerning which were from time to time published in the semi-official gazette known as the *Journal de l'Empire*. These remarks concerning Madame de Staël and her movements were

inserted by order of the Emperor, and it is difficult to imagine that so great a man can have been animated only by petty spite in making such suggestions as that "interesting details are to be expected concerning her stay in Vienna." Again, what was the object, unless it were to reveal to the French nation how dangerous an enemy they had in Germaine, of making a public announcement in the *Journal* to the effect that she had placed her son Albert in the Imperial Academy of Engineering, or that one of the Grand Dukes had invited her to a splendid ball on the occasion of the marriage of the Emperor of Austria ?

The French Ambassador in Vienna was at this time being publicly slighted whenever possible, while, on the other hand, Mr. Adair, the British, and Prince Kourakine, the Russian, representative were accorded all possible honour.

English intrigue was as rife in Austria as it had been for years past in Northern Germany, with the result that while the British Embassy was crowded that of France was deserted ; moreover, the persons invited to the British Embassy were precisely those best known for their hatred of France.

These things were known in Paris, especially when, on account of the manner in which he was slighted, the French Ambassador was withdrawn, merely a *chargé d'affaires* being left to replace him.

The sensation made by Germaine in Vienna was unprecedented, so much so that it was remembered and spoken of for years afterwards. Madame de Staël herself wrote to her former kind hostess, the Grand

Duchess Louise at Weimar, and told her of her successes, saying that favours had been heaped upon her, while she had been marvellously well received at Court. It was a winter when, on account of the nuptials of Francis II. with his cousin Mary Louise d'Este, the frivolous, pleasure-loving inhabitants of Vienna let themselves go more than usual. Thus ball succeeded ball and fête followed fête, and at every festivity Germaine was present, while all eyes were upon her. It is perhaps not to be wondered at that Madame de Staël should have proved an object of attraction when we read a description of the truly remarkable costumes that the lady affected. "She swept through the drawing-rooms in a gold-coloured satin, sparkling with diamonds, and with a bird of paradise stuck in her hair."

Germaine had not, of course, come to Vienna unattended, having brought with her William Schlegel, while the young historian Sismonde de Sismondi soon followed her from Switzerland and travelled about with her, going with Madame de Staël to Weimar when she left Vienna. While at the Austrian capital, Schlegel played up to the prevailing hatred of all things French by giving "a course" of lessons, which took the form of a series of lectures in which, while running down French literature and tearing to pieces the celebrated *Phèdre* of the great dramatist Racine, he protested against the slavery of Germany under the yoke of France. While Schlegel was depreciating the glories of the reign of Louis XIV., literary, artistic, and military, he did not neglect at the same time

enthusiastically to remind his audience of the past glories of Germany.

The "course" of Schlegel was "an immense success," at least so wrote Madame de Staël, who was credited by the fashionable Viennese audience which attended the lectures with having had more than a trivial share in this attempt on the part of her resident tutor to bring about the awakening of Germany. At every reference to Louis XIV., "*le Grand Monarque*," who less than a hundred years earlier had been engaged in trampling on his neighbours, Schlegel's listeners could but make comparison in their minds with Napoleon, now busily employed in crushing underfoot the liberties of Europe. A general emotion was created by these lessons throughout Germany. They were translated by Germaine's cousin, Madame Necker de Saussure, into French in the year 1814, but previous to that date Madame de Staël had been able to publish her most remarkable work, which embodied the ideas enunciated in Vienna by Schlegel. This was her book *De l'Allemagne* ("On Germany"), which she was now soon to write with William Schlegel's able assistance, but which was to cost her many a heartpang ere, eventually, she was to be enabled to publish it, years later, in a foreign country.

A few months before the visit to Vienna, Schlegel had already brought out in French his *Comparison between the Phèdra of Racine and that of Euripides*, and its publication had had the result of getting the author severely disliked in France. The *Journal de l'Empire*, in criticising the work, did not forget to recall public

attention to Schlegel's position in the household of Madame de Staël. The paper saw a close connection, which was anti-French, between the spirit which pulled down Racine from his pedestal and that which mocked at Frenchmen by the presentation, as in *Corinne*, of a Comte d'Erfeuil or a M. de Maltigues. If Schlegel, a comparatively humble and unknown individual, had succeeded in bringing the fulminations of the *Journal de l'Empire* down on his head, how much more reason was there to suppose that Germaine de Staël's movements would not be overlooked by the potentate from whom the *Journal* took its orders !

It so happened that, when passing through a place called Teplitz, Madame de Staël came into contact with a man who was at the same time in the pay of England and of Austria—a man of great brain power, whose dominating idea consisted in accomplishing the delivery of Europe, not by Russia or by England, but by a resuscitated Germany. This man was named Gentz ; he had originally been a Privy Councillor in Prussia, but had entered the Austrian service later. After the disastrous battle of Austerlitz he wrote to his friend Müller that he had nothing left to live for and would welcome death.

Gentz, who was perhaps the most thoroughgoing hater of Napoleon in all Europe, upon meeting Germaine at Teplitz immediately became enthusiastic about her, and wrote to the above-mentioned Müller as follows : " Yesterday I spent the day with her, and we initiated a great friendship. You can hardly form an idea of the ease of intercourse with her. In half an

hour you feel as if you had known her for many years. I had feared the flashes and sallies of her wit ; I found her, on the contrary, particularly fluent, clear, persevering, methodical, coherent, large-minded—inviting discussion in a way unlike any other woman in the world ; one seemed to be able to go on talking with her for ever."

Gentz and Madame de Staël soon became fellow workers in a common cause ; the idea to which he had dedicated his life and powers was exactly that which animated her. She wrote in the preface of her book *On Germany* : " Individuals might resign themselves to destiny, nations never ! " Together, Gentz and Germaine preached this doctrine ; between them, they roused the apathy of Germany to united action.

The wideawake Napoleon soon heard of the new alliance and understood what was in the wind. Realising that an active correspondence was taking place between the pair, and that it contained the elements of danger for France, he now issued instructions to all French Ministers in the various German countries, especially in Weimar, not to visit Madame de Staël.

By this time the Peninsular War had commenced, and from Bayonne on the borders of Spain the Emperor, after writing to Fouché, wrote also to Champagny concerning the intriguing of Germaine with the head of the English agents abroad.

To the former, on June 28th, 1808, the Emperor sent the following letter : " Madame de Staël is keeping up a continued correspondence with the person named Gentz, and has got in with the London plotters. I

desire that she shall be watched at Coppet, and that, in consequence, you cause orders to be given to the Prefect at Geneva and to the Commandant of the Gendarmerie. This *liaison* with this individual can only work to the detriment of France. You will make it understood that until now I have only looked upon her *as a crazy woman*, but that from henceforth she enters into the category of those who endanger public tranquillity."

This letter is particularly interesting as showing that at length the Emperor has made up his mind that he can no longer treat the actions of Madame de Staël as those of a more or less irresponsible woman, carried away by her feminine vanity. She has ceased to be merely crack-brained—she is dangerous! In future we shall find no more handling of Germaine with kid gloves. On three separate occasions—on both of her visits to Germany and her visit to Italy—Napoleon has behaved towards her *en galant homme*, given instructions that the agents of France everywhere are to be civil to her, to assist her movements. All that is now done with; the rupture brought about long ago by the recalcitrant lady has become definite. Madame de Staël will henceforth find herself confined to Coppet, scarcely even allowed to drive into Geneva. Moreover, she will be continually watched by the police.

As for that intelligent and clever individual Gentz, it is sad to relate that in the end he proved inconstant to the lady who was to be doomed to suffer for her friendship with him. We find him writing at one time in a way which would betoken a lasting attachment. "I

tell you plainly that I am enchanted with Madame de Staël. Such a breadth and depth of intellect, joined to such ease, versatility, kindliness and grace in conversation, I have never met in my life. I must and will see her again!" After feeling towards Germaine like this, what can she have done to Gentz to put him off her completely? That something took place between the fellow-plotters against Napoleon that has never transpired is evident, since four years later, when again she was in Vienna, she found that he regarded her with downright dislike. Moreover, Gentz wrote a letter to a female admirer of Germaine, the clever Jewess, Rachel Levin, whom she used often to meet at the house of William Humboldt, and in this letter he abused Madame de Staël in unbounded and shameful terms.

After this, although they met once again in Paris, in the year 1814, there was no more intimacy or even friendship between Germaine and the vehement Austrian patriot, who for a considerable period was in the habit of doing her homage, of offering up incense at her feet.

CHAPTER XXIII

GERMAINE'S APOTHEOSIS AT BLOIS

By her letters and by her talk, by her endless flow of impassioned periods, Madame de Staël sought to reveal to themselves those whom she considered as the docile Germans. Her work bore its fruit, but it never seems to have entered her head that while stirring up those of foreign race against her personal enemy, Napoleon, she was also stirring them up against France. But these various peoples whom she was constantly scolding as being lazy and good for nothing, devoid, moreover of patriotism, were by no manner of means as supine as she blindly imagined. Already they were everywhere seething with discontent and hatred ; this hatred, however, being on a larger scale than a narrow one-man hatred, for it included a whole nation. Unaware of this fact, Germaine continued to preach the awakening of Germany, especially as, having adopted the views of her admirer Gentz, she had become convinced that through the combined action of the Teutonic States alone could be brought about the downfall of the man of genius who had had the bad taste to elude, if not actually to scorn, her advances.

While hating everything else French, the inhabitants of the countries beyond the Rhine made one

exception, Madame de Staël herself was immensely popular. This may well have been because they considered the agitating woman to be but a mongrel, without country and without fatherland. With a father of Germanic descent, who was born in Switzerland, a mother of mixed nationality, having herself been born in France and having become a Swede by her marriage with the Baron de Staël-Holstein and Swiss by her subsequent Swiss domicile, in what light was it possible to consider the authoress of *Corinne* save in that of a cosmopolitan ? Certainly it was hard to see in Germaine that which she liked to consider herself—a Frenchwoman.

An example of the way in which Madame de Staël was beloved on German soil was revealed by her in a letter to Madame Récamier, after she left Vienna in 1808. In this epistle she described to her friend an incident which occurred as she was driving across the frontier of Saxony. A minor official of some kind flung open the door of her travelling carriage and gazed upon her. " For years past," exclaimed this man, " I have been longing to set eyes on you, and now that I have done so I can die happy ! "

On her way homewards, Madame de Staël had passed through the town of Weimar, where she had been so happy on the occasion of her former visit to German soil. But now what a change ! After the battles round Jena, which was only a few miles distant, the town had been entered and pillaged. While the country had been compelled to pay an immense subsidy to the French victors, the Grand Duke Karl

August and his family, who had been so kind to Germaine, had fallen upon evil days. The conqueror had forced the Grand Duke to join his Confederation of the Rhine; his mother, the Grand Duchess Amelia, was dead; and his wife, the Grand Duchess Louise, who had welcomed Germaine as one of her own household, was now utterly broken in spirit and had lost her health completely. Schiller, too, had died since Madame de Staël had been last in Weimar.

With much food for reflection, she turned her back upon the place where she had enjoyed such happy days and returned in the most melancholy spirits to Coppet. She had left her younger son, Albert, behind her at the Austrian Military Academy, but her elder boy, the young Baron Auguste de Staël, who had remained in Switzerland, had not been idle during her absence.

This lad was now seventeen years of age. Hearing that the Emperor was about to pass through Chambéry, in Savoy, he hurried off to that place and sought an audience, which was accorded by Napoleon at an inn.

The youth had gone to plead on behalf of his mother, and the Emperor not only received him most kindly but kept him with him for the best part of an hour. Concerning Madame de Staël, Napoleon said nothing unkind; her fault was, he said, that she could not help "playing tricks and intriguing," and that therefore it was absolutely impossible for him to allow her to remain in Paris. If he were to let her stay there for six months he would inevitably be compelled to shut her up in Bicêtre or the Temple. To take such a step, added Napoleon to Auguste, would be most

distasteful to him, and it would, moreover, injure him in public opinion. He continued, in a confidential manner, to young Stael: "Paris, you see, is where I live, and I only wish to have there people who like me. If I allowed your mother to come to Paris, she would be doing some foolish things and cause me to lose all those who surround me—has she not already caused me to lose the Tribunat?

"With this exception, she can go anywhere else she likes: to Rome, to Naples, to Vienna, to Berlin, to Milan, to Lyons; yes, even to London, to publish libels."

Some people might consider that the conqueror of half Europe was by this permission giving Madame de Staël a pretty free hand and that she ought to have been contented. It was not, however, what she wanted, which was to come and push herself under Napoleon's very nose and brave him in that Paris where he lived, and where, as he said, he wished to be surrounded only by those who were his friends.

This interview between the Emperor and Auguste de Staël took place at the end of December, 1807, and before Napoleon had learned of the intimacy and correspondence of Germaine with Gentz, subsequent to which he felt himself compelled to adopt more rigorous measures and curtail her liberty.

She was now confined to Coppet and watched, for had not the Emperor written that for the future she was to be considered "as one who endangered the public tranquillity"?

Needless to say that Germaine fretted against the

bit, but she was nevertheless compelled to feel the curb, and for a time, at all events, but slightly struggled against it, for fear of getting too much hurt in the process.

She had plenty of occupation to interest her, it is true, for she was now busy writing her book *De l'Allemagne*, but literary occupation was not enough for her. What Madame de Staël longed for was to be surrounded with friends, to whom she could bemoan her fate while railing against the inhumanity of her gaoler.

Of friends, however, save Sismondi, who lived mostly at Geneva, she was at this time deprived, since, fearing for their own skins, they would not come near her. Even Gérando, whom she looked upon as one of the faithful, was not willing to take any risks on account of Germaine. He was passing through Geneva, but carefully avoided Coppet. She felt this as a blow, but it was to be succeeded by another. Gérando was on the closest terms of intimacy with the imprudent Countess of Albany, who after the death of her husband, Prince Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, had lived in various countries, including France and England, with Count Alfieri, the Italian poet. The Countess of Albany, who was a friend of Madame de Staël, was following Gérando through Geneva to Italy, and Germaine was hoping to be able to entertain her at Coppet, when she too "passed by on the other side."

This avoidance of her cut Madame de Staël so much that she instructed Sismondi to write for her the following letter: "Gérando would make you believe

that this place is pest-stricken ; he has deceived you, Madame, and I can assure you that nothing is less compromising than to come to Coppet." In making this statement to the widow of Charles Edward, Madame de Staël was going beyond the truth, for that the air of Coppet was distinctly unhealthy for visitors at that time was recognised by many of the usual *habitués* of the château, who accordingly kept their distance.

Moreover, even in France the friends of Germaine were watched—Juliette Récamier in particular. Not only was the Emperor displeased with this lady on account of her love intrigue with Prince August of Prussia, but he was aware that she was allowing herself to be made use of for the transmission of letters from Coppet. Madame Récamier was accordingly put under the ban. Napoleon gave out emphatically in his wife's salon that he would consider anyone visiting her as a personal enemy.

To various German princes, foreign nobles, and grand dukes who, nevertheless, could not refrain from secretly, as they thought, paying their respects to the celebrated beauty, the Emperor caused word to be conveyed to the effect that he disapproved of any sympathy being shown to either Madame Récamier or Madame de Staël. For he now linked the pair together in his mind, in doing which he was not altogether unjustified.

The result of this persecution of herself and her friends began to wear on Madame de Staël before long, and consequently she determined to go to America,

and either to take her eldest son with her or to send him on ahead and then follow. Her project included a return journey on her own part to England. She was able to obtain a passport for her son direct from Geneva to the United States, no permission, however, being given to Auguste to stay at Paris on the way to his port of embarkation.

Germaine, however, neither sent her son to America nor did she ever go herself. She was, in fact, afraid of the long sea journey, and did not wish to cut herself off completely from civilisation by going to live among a lot of barbarians! For so she considered the Americans to be, and especially after she had seen an American newspaper which described her as "a very rich woman, who had written some books which brought her in *enough money!*"

At length Madame de Staël finished her book, which probed to the bottom the depths of the manners, philosophy, and literature of Germany, and, having finished it, determined to publish it in Paris. Further, she resolved that to France she would go for its publication. She had obtained a passport for herself by this time to go to the United States, for the French authorities were only too delighted to give it to her, hoping to get her safely out of the way. She made no use of it; but contrived to get another one which permitted her to enter France, on condition that she approached no nearer than fifty leagues to Paris. Triumphantly she proceeded to Lyons in the month of June, 1809, being accompanied by a regular suite as though she were a royal personage. There she was

met by Juliette Récamier, but after seeing some plays performed at Lyons, in which figured the famous actor Talma, she returned to her Swiss home. Her endeavour to take Talma back with her was frustrated by the police, but in the following April she again entered Lyons, this time " to embrace Camille Jordan," and thence Madame de Staël proceeded to a splendid old historical château at Chaumont, near Blois.

It is very evident that, save for the complaisance of Fouché, still Minister of Police, Germaine could never have thus returned to France in direct opposition to the Emperor's orders, which were repeated by letter to Fouché in April, the very month of her arrival. Although Germaine knew it not, the tricky Fouche's *régime* was nearly over, Napoleon being exasperated at his repeated disobedience in his absence. While, however, the untrustworthy Minister of Police was still top of the tree and willing to lengthen her rope, Madame de Staël determined to gambol around and take every advantage of her increased liberty of action.

Once arrived at the stately castle of Chaumont-sur-Loire, where formerly had resided Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of two kings, and Catherine de Médicis, wife of one king and mother of three others, Germaine proceeded to let the world know that she was alive. She filled the château from top to bottom with all her old friends and many others. Nobles, princes, counts, prefects of police, Lemontey (the Imperial Censor), Madame Récamier, Camille Jordan, Benjamin—now married, but without his wife—Schlegel, a poet named Chamisso, Mathieu de Montmorency, both the Barantes

—father and son ; such were some of the guests at Chaumont. And followed by a *cortège* of these people, Germaine was in the habit of making an irruption into Blois to the opera, while all the inhabitants rushed to their doors and windows to see her pass. It was the apotheosis of Madame de Staël !

CHAPTER XXIV

BETTINA ON MADAME DE STAËL

When Madame de Staël had last left Weimar for Coppet she had passed through Frankfort, where lived Goethe's mother, who was always known as the "Frau Rath." There was also occasionally residing in this town a young lady named Bettina. She was twenty-three years old, and became the authoress of a book called *Goethe's Correspondence with a Child*, the child being herself.

In Lady Blennerhassett's three weighty volumes on Madame de Staël, which were translated from the original German over a generation ago by J. E. Gordon Cumming, are recorded some amusing extracts from the sprightly Bettina's letters, some of which are well worthy of quotation. It is evident that Bettina found Germaine rather too overpowering for her, but we will let her speak for herself. In a letter to the Frau Rath she comments as follows :

"A celebrated woman is a very curious thing. No other woman can compare with her ; she is like brandy with which the corn whence it is derived cannot be compared. As brandy tickles the palate and goes to the head, so is a celebrated woman ; but I prefer the

pure grain as sown by the sower in the loose earth. I would rather be a simple ear of corn than a celebrated woman, and I would rather be as daily bread to the sower than go to his head like a dram.

"I will only now tell you that I fed with the Staël at Mayence; no woman would sit beside her at table, so I went and did so. It was uncomfortable enough; the gentlemen all stood round the table, and had planted themselves behind us, and one pushed against the other to speak to her and to look her in the face; they bent right over me. I said: '*Vos adorateurs me suffoquent*,' and she laughed. She said that Goethe had spoken of me to her. I was glad to remain seated, as I should have liked to have known what he had said; and yet I was not pleased, as I should have preferred his speaking to no one about me; neither do I believe that he did so. She probably only said so. At length there were so many who leant over me to speak to her that I could stand it no longer. I said to her: 'Your laurels weigh too heavily on my shoulders.' I stood up and squeezed myself away through her admirers, upon which her companion Sismondi came and kissed my hand, saying that I was very clever. He repeated it to the others, and they reiterated it at least twenty times, as though I were a prince, in whom everything is considered clever, no matter how ordinary it may be.

"Afterwards I listened to her speaking about Goethe. She said that she had expected to find a second Werther, but she had been mistaken, as neither his manner nor his figure reminded her in the least of

Werther, and she regretted that he was totally lacking in this respect.

"Frau Rath, I was angry at these remarks (you will say that this was superfluous). I turned to Schlegel and said to him in German, 'Madame de Staël is doubly mistaken, first in her expectation and then in her opinion. We Germans expect Goethe to be able to produce twenty more heroes out of his sleeve of the sort that fills the French with so much respect. But we are of opinion that he himself is quite a different sort of hero.' Schlegel has been to blame for not bringing her to a more correct understanding on this subject.

"She threw down a laurel leaf with which she had been toying. I trod upon it, kicked it aside, and went away.

"This is what passed with the celebrated woman. You do not require to speak French to her; only talk to her with your fingers and carry on a commentary with your large eyes, that will impress her."

By her expression "your large eyes" it is evident that the fair Bettina here means eyes of astonishment and admiration—the *gros yeux* of the French.

The incident of her first trampling upon and then violently kicking away from her the laurel twig dropped by the woman who had spoken too familiarly concerning Goethe speaks for itself. Bettina would rather that Goethe had not spoken of her to anyone; her intimacy with the author of *Faust* was evidently

something too precious to be a subject of conversation between him and a wandering French celebrity, who had endeavoured to annex him to herself.

There is a delicious sense of irony in the way in which the lively "child of twenty-three" talks to Goethe himself in a letter describing a visit paid by "Corinne" to his mother, of whose adornment in honour of the event Bettina discants in the most amusing style.

"Your mother had dressed herself wondrously, either from irony or pride, but in the German and not in the French style. I must tell you that when I saw your mother with three feathers on her head, each nodding in a different direction—red, white, and blue, the French national colours—and rising from a field of sunflowers, my heart beat with amusement and expectation. She was most artistically rouged; her great dark eyes fired a volley of artillery; around her neck hung the Queen of Prussia's famous ornament; laces of ancient appearance and great beauty, a real family treasure, concealed her bosom, and thus she stood. In one hand, covered with a white kid glove, she held an artistic fan, with which she set the air in motion; the other, which was uncovered, was loaded with sparkling rings and took a pinch of snuff from time to time from a gold snuff-box adorned with your miniature, portraying you with powdered hair leaning your head pensively on your hand.

"The distinguished assemblage of elderly ladies formed a half-circle in Moritz Bethmann's bed-chamber, on a crimson carpet with a white ground. I

said to your mother: 'Madame de Staël will think that she has been summoned before the bar of the court of love, for the bed over there looks like the hidden throne of Venus.' One might expect that a good deal would have to be answered for!

"At length the long-expected one came through a series of lit-up rooms, accompanied by Benjamin Constant. She was dressed as Corinne: an orange and blue turban, a robe of the same, an orange tunic with a very short waist, so that little room was left for her heart. Her dark eyebrows and lashes shone, her lips were also mystically red, the gloves had slipped down and only concealed the hand in which she held the usual laurel-twig. The room where Corinne was awaited lay lower than the rest, so that she had to come down four steps. Unfortunately, she raised her dress in front instead of at the back; this gave a severe blow to the solemnity of her entry. For a moment the way in which this figure, got up in such a completely oriental fashion, advanced upon the stiff ladies of virtuous Frankfort was something more than comic. I had put myself in the background that I might observe the scene. I noticed Madame de Staël's astonishment at your mother's wonderful dress and appearance. She had developed a mighty proud expression. She spread her robes out with her left hand and saluted with her right, playing her fan in the meanwhile, and repeatedly inclining her head in the most condescending way.

"She raised her voice so that it could be heard all through the room, and said: '*Je suis la mère de*

Goethe!' *'Ah, je suis charmée,'* replied the authoress, and here followed a solemn silence."

Bettina, who was now called upon to enact the part of interpreter between the stately pair of ladies, continues her description of the interview in humorous style, until Madame de Staël began to talk about Goethe's letters, when "the child" becomes vexed and gets up in arms.

"The Staël spoke of your letters, and said that she would like to read how you wrote to your mother, and she promised that she should. I thought to myself that she certainly would not get your letters to read, for I am by no means friendly towards her; every time your name crossed her ugly lips it gave me an internal shock."

Madame de Staël apparently boasted of the friendly way in which Goethe wrote to her. Thereupon, Bettina says, "I lost patience. How can you like such an unpleasant face? You are vain, or perhaps she was only lying." Poor Bettina was jealous!

This fact becomes plainly apparent when, subsequently, Goethe's mother appears to have expressed herself as being honoured by having made Germaine's acquaintance, and tells "the child" that one cannot place a woman of that kind in the same category as other women, and also calls Bettina childish and conceited when she becomes sensitive on hearing that Madame de Staël has received a letter from Goethe speaking highly of the meteor who has flashed across their horizon. Bettina sneers, and writes to Goethe: "I felt compassion for you, and said: 'The vanity of

the god-like stripling gives proof of his eternal youth. Your mother could not understand the joke; she considered that I was too presumptuous, and that I should not allow myself to fancy that you took any interest in me except as a child still playing with her doll. With the Staël you could talk of the wise things of life, you could only joke with me. What if your mother were right? "

CHAPTER XXV

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE BOOK

BEFORE our digression to relate the incident of Madame de Staël's meeting with the Frau Rath, we left her enjoying herself thoroughly, and playing the part of a queen at the beautiful Château de Chaumont, where she was entertaining largely. Among her guests there was the Prefect of Blois, M. de Corbigny by name, who was so much attracted by the charms of his hostess as to invite her, with several of her intimates, to his house in return. This was a foolish action, for which, with other imprudences, he was to suffer later, but it was often the unfortunate fate of Germaine to compromise those who showed her too much friendship.

Owing to the return from America of the owner of the castle which she was occupying, she was before long compelled to remove to another country house, named the Château de Fossé. There, all would have gone well with Madame de Staël if only she had been content to occupy her time quietly while correcting the proofs of her book about Germany. Regardless of consequences, however, she continued at Fossé, as at Chaumont, to lead life on the largest scale, to dash about with her train of followers and do everything possible to attract attention to herself. It was as

though she were determined to brave the Emperor, to show him that the only law by which she consented to be ruled was the law of her own will. To prove this the more effectually, Madame de Staël did not neglect to express herself very loudly on the subject of the overbearing behaviour of Napoleon in connection with his arrest of the Spanish princes.

Unfortunately for her, in the early part of the summer of 1810 the Emperor learned that Fouché was engaged in some underhand intrigues with England. He was sent packing, while in his place as Minister of Police was installed once more the one man upon whom Napoleon could absolutely rely, Savary, the Duc de Rovigo.

With the complaisant Fouché gone and the Duc de Rovigo in office, it would not be long before Germaine would be able to exclaim regretfully, " a change came o'er the spirit of my dream " ! So certain was Napoleon of the new Minister of Police that he himself said, " If I ordered Savary to cut the throats of his wife and children, he would not hesitate to obey."

It was not necessary to give him any especial orders concerning Germaine, for he had already had a hint in general terms that Fouché had been behaving slackly in the case of various persons, and this was enough for Savary, and he kept an eye upon the movements of all those with whom his predecessor had been too easy.

Quite unsuspecting of any possibility of trouble, Madame de Staël went off one day in September for a

little trip with Mathieu and some of her other intimates to a country house that Montmorency owned a few miles from Blois ; and on the following night, after having lost their way roaming about in the romantic forest, the party became the guests of a gentleman who owned a magnificent house full of interesting Indian curiosities, the inspection of which Germaine found most entrancing.

While enjoying herself in this manner, the Duc de Rovigo had been bearing the lady in mind, to such an extent that he had sent formal orders to M. de Corbigny which concerned her deeply. The Prefect of Blois was instructed to request Madame de Staël to take herself off within forty-eight hours. She was to be given the option of making use of her passport for the United States or of returning either to Geneva or Coppet. Worse than this, M. de Corbigny was ordered to seize at once the manuscript and all the printed proofs of Germaine's book *De l'Allemagne* that he could find. The Prefect returned an immediate reply, to the effect that Madame de Staël could not be found, but that he would obey his instructions upon her return to her place of residence.

The book was at this time being examined by the censors in Paris ; but without waiting for their decision as to whether it would be allowed to appear or not without alteration, the publisher, Nicole by name, had foolishly proceeded to print off ten thousand copies. Upon this mass of printed copies of the book *On Germany* the official seals of the Ministry of Police were placed, as also upon the printer's forms, which could

not therefore be used for printing off any more copies.

Auguste de Staël was at Fossé. He rode off in the middle of the night to try to find his mother and M. de Montmorency, concerning whose absence the young fellow was most anxious. Like them, he lost himself, but, like them again, he found a hospitable shelter at the Château of Conan, where they had taken refuge. Waking up Mathieu, and asking him to inform his mother of the peril threatening her, the wideawake Auguste, without delaying, hurried back at once to Fossé. There, owing to the politeness of the friendly M. de Corbigny in waiting for the return of Madame de Staël before making a search, Auguste was able to possess himself of either the original manuscript of his mother's book or an imperfectly bound copy of the book stitched together.

Madame de Staël, in floods of tears at the loss of the fruits of her labours, and in despair at not being able to pass the coming winter in France, returned with Mathieu to Fossé, there to find the house surrounded by police. Meanwhile Auguste got over a garden wall and made good his escape with the book.

The next act in the play consisted in Germaine's manœuvres to make a fool of the amiable Corbigny, whom apparently she completely deceived. She pretended to write to the publisher in Paris for the manuscript; she pretended to be willing to deliver over to the Prefect all the proofs, but only did so after a day or two supposed to have been passed in making search for them; and eventually she fobbed the

Prefect off with an incomplete and bad copy. Thus time was saved and Auguste got clear away.

As for getting Madame de Staël to move off within forty-eight hours, that was more than Corbigny could accomplish. It is quite possible that he had not really been as blind as he had appeared to be in the matter of the manuscript ; but at all events, he was not going to cause violent hands to be laid upon a lady who was his personal friend. In the end, the Prefect of Blois politely acceded to Germaine's request, and wrote to the Minister in Paris to ask that she might be accorded a delay of a few days longer.

In his letter to the Duc de Rovigo, Corbigny pointed out that he was unable to make Madame de Staël move without employing force, " to employ which," he added, " I had not got your Excellency's precise instructions. I therefore retired, while informing Madame de Staël that I would inform you of her demand."

The punishment of the unhappy Corbigny for his want of firmness in his relations throughout with Germaine was more than he could bear. He received first a severe reprimand from the Minister of Police and then a crushing reproof from the Emperor. He felt this so much that he became ill, and died of the blow.

Meanwhile Madame de Staël was still flattering herself that she would be able to obtain a reprieve in the matter of her departure; she also never dreamed but that she would be able to publish her book. All her outcry in her letters to Madame Récamier at this

time concerns her fears that some of the passages in the book will be cut out. As for total suppression, she never thought of such a thing being possible.

Nevertheless, that is what happened. After reading *De l'Allemagne* himself, Napoleon at first only ordered various passages to be excised. In vain Germaine implored to be allowed to see the Emperor to argue with him; in vain, also, acting on her behalf, Juliette Récamier used all the seduction of her coquetries upon M. Esménard, the chief Press Censor, for he proved quite insensible to her blandishments. Finally, between Napoleon and the Press Censor, it was decided that it would be easier to suppress the book altogether than to cut out all the objectionable passages. Accordingly the Emperor ordered the destruction of all the printed copies.

Now why had Napoleon proved so ruthless? While looking through the pages he had found the whole spirit in which the book was written so dangerous that he became irritated and, it is said, threw one volume into the fire. There was a reference to the Duke of Brunswick, and many concerning England, that he had at first considered might be cut out and the book allowed to appear without them. But consideration of the work as a whole had convinced Napoleon that even with these excisions it would be harmful in the highest degree, and that therefore the wiser plan was to prevent its publication entirely.

A curious incident in connection with this event is that, while himself considering the book *On Germany*, the Emperor questioned the right of the authoress to

her title, and wrote to ask Savary if Madame de Staël had the right to call herself "Baronne." "Has she," he enquired, "taken this title when publishing her previous works?" In that same letter he complains of her exaggerated praise of England, remarking: "This unfortunate exaltation has already done us enough harm."

The odd thing is that Germaine, fatuous as usual, appeared to think that the Emperor would find pleasure in the pages of her work, since she herself sent him one of the printed copies, with a letter in which she expressed the hope that he would deign to peruse it.

In the first week of October, 1810, the Duc de Rovigo wrote personally to Madame de Staël that her book "was not French," and if she must now suffer the penalty of exile it was only on account of her general behaviour, of which it was "the natural consequence." The Minister of Police concluded his epistle by sarcastically informing the distressed lady that "it had seemed to him that the air of France was not healthy for her," and that she had better, therefore, leave for America in a week's time.

The best friend of Madame de Staël throughout the whole of this epoch was Mathieu de Montmorency. Had she but listened to his sage counsels, she would from the first, instead of leading a noisy existence in the public eye, have gone quietly to live in the country-house that he had put at her disposal, fifteen miles from Blois. When she wrote that the place was a desert where she could not exist, Mathieu gently

reproached the woman whose nature he so well understood. "Ah, my poor friend," he replied, "the real cause of these thoughts, rather than the place, is the want of a couple of hours of exalted or romantic conversation, without on your part any real object, or indeed any positive sentiment."

When definitely ordered to go, Germaine's greatest grief appears to have been to be obliged to leave young Prosper de Barante, from whom she took a heartrending farewell.

CHAPTER XXVI

JULIETTE AND MATHIEU EXILED

GOOD-BYE, Montmorency! Farewell, Prosper de Barante! and back to Coppet once more; such was the fate of Germaine before the end of October, 1810. Coppet was, moreover, no longer the Coppet of old days, which could be filled up with old friends, old and new lovers, with the time passed in rollicking and diversion, in literary evenings or the performance of theatricals. No, alas! for if the air of France had in the view of the Duc de Rovigo become unhealthy for Madame de Staël, so in the opinion of the Emperor had the air of the ancient château on the Lake of Geneva become distinctly unhealthy for that lady's friends.

On her way back from France, Germaine had conceived the idea of making use of her passport to America to leave the country by one of the northern ports, from which she could reach the shores of England. Rovigo, however, who could see through a stone wall as far as most people, saw through her scheme, and therefore instructed her only to embark for the United States by one of several western or southern ports which he expressly designated.

Baffled thus, she returned sadly to Switzerland, and meanwhile Nicole, her publisher in Paris, went bankrupt, having lost over 30,000 francs from his outlay on

the production of *De l'Allemagne*. The unfortunate publisher persuaded René de Châteaubriand to write on his behalf to the châtelaine of Coppet and point out to her his sad condition, when Germaine very generously remitted to Nicole the sum of 13,000 francs which he had paid over to her on the receipt of her manuscript.

With the copy of the book which had been rescued, she was able three years later to publish the suppressed work in London, where it was brought out by John Murray in 1813, when it had a very great effect on the public opinion of Europe, and especially that of all the Germanic countries. There, Goethe expressed himself concerning the work, which really had no other intention than to serve as an appeal to revolt and independence, in the following terms: "The French police, intelligent enough to understand that a work like this would be bound to increase the confidence of the Germans in themselves, had prudently placed it in the pillory. At the present moment the book produces an astonishing effect. If it had only appeared sooner, all the great events which have just taken place would have been put down to its influence."

To return to the date when Germaine had returned to Switzerland after the seizure and destruction of her book in France. She found that things had changed indeed. No longer was her complacent friend M. de Barante to remain as Prefect at Geneva. He had received orders to seal up all the papers at Coppet, but contented himself with receiving a written promise from Madame de Staël that she would neither print her book

On Germany in any country or allow it to be brought out by anybody else.

As in the case of M. de Corbigny, Barante's punishment was not long in coming. He was relieved of his office by the Duc de Rovigo, and replaced by a M. de Capelle, a man of a much more servile disposition. This M. de Capelle did not for long leave Germaine unmolested, but very soon made his appearance at Coppet, and in a peremptory manner demanded that the missing manuscript of the book should be handed over to him. To this request he obtained merely a curt refusal. Germaine told the new Prefect that the manuscript was in safety abroad, and that there it should remain.

De Capelle's spite soon became evident. William Schlegel was ordered to leave Coppet without delay and was forced to retire to Germany. Left thus alone, Madame de Staël cried aloud in her letters, bemoaning her fate, for she did not see why she should be abandoned.

From both the faithful Mathieu and the affectionate Juliette Récamier she heard in reply. In a combined letter which they entrusted to a friend to deliver, the pair counselled moderation, advised her to possess her soul in patience for a little time until the storm blew over.

Germaine foolishly took this sensible letter in bad part, and replied bitterly, saying that it was reserved to those whom she loved most to make her feel the thorns of exile, or rather to plunge a dagger into her heart, by proving that she had become to them only an object of horror and repulsion.

On the receipt of this absurd epistle, the generous-hearted Mathieu hurried off to Coppet in August, 1811, but scarcely had he arrived before M. Capelle conveyed to him instructions, received from the Minister of Police, ordering him not to return to Paris or approach the capital nearer than forty leagues. De Montmorency was, however, accorded permission to stay at either Geneva or Coppet if he so chose.

He took his punishment calmly, with the usual religious resignation of his nature, but instantly wrote off to Juliette warning her to keep away. She, however, had also been stung by Germaine's unjust letter of reproach, and nothing could prevent her from coming to relieve her friend's solitude by her presence. Her stay at Coppet was but a short one, and at the last moment, being alarmed, Madame de Staël had endeavoured to cause her to turn back when already on the way by sending Auguste to meet her and warn her of her danger. This warning had not deterred the loving friend; but once Juliette had left Coppet, as in the case of Mathieu, her punishment fell upon her. She had scarcely reached the house of a cousin in France before a Prefect of Police appeared and handed her the following order: "Madame Récamier, *née* Juliette Bernard, will retire to a distance of forty leagues from Paris."

Although the *amour propre* of Madame de Staël was doubtless gratified to think that her importance was so great that her friends were punished with sentences of exile for venturing to see her, and although she made accordingly a great outcry on the subject,

she must have been aware of the fact that she was not the sole cause of the punishment of Mathieu and Juliette. While the former was suspected, and with reason, of having entered into a plot with his cousin, Adrien de Montmorency, to free the Spanish princes captured at Bayonne by Napoleon, the salon of Madame Récamier in Paris had become a centre of opposition against the Government. Their visit to the disgraced châtelaine of Coppet afforded, however, an excellent pretext for the decree of exile pronounced against them both. The pretext was the more useful as the Government was not anxious at the moment to disclose all that it was aware of. In any case, the pair of friends deserved punishment for proceeding to Coppet so soon after the disgrace of Madame de Staël.

CHAPTER XXVII

GERMAINE'S LOVE FOR ROCCA

HAVING been born in the year 1766, the ever-active ever-turbulent, and ever-loving Germaine was now well over forty. On October 5th, 1810, finding herself alone at Fossé, owing to the absence of her watch-dog Mathieu, she had before finally leaving that place rushed off in secret to Saumur, to see the beloved young Prosper de Barante, who was now a sub-Prefect and on the road to further advancement.

Prosper had been duly embraced, the heartbreaking farewell which he had been led by letter to expect had been taken of him, and sorrowfully had Madame de Staël returned alone, feeling her heart a void.

Long past was the day when she had written that with the loss of the lovers of days gone by, those whom she had most loved, Talleyrand, Narbonne and Mathieu, life had become for her little but a dreary blank. Germaine had, however, contrived to fill up that blank pretty well from time to time. For that matter, did not Mathieu de Montmorency still remain as a devoted and reliable friend ?

But how could mere friendship satisfy the craving of the passionate heart of a Germaine de Staël ? Had she now, indeed, relinquished the longing for any

warmer sensations with her tragic announcement: "The door of my heart is shut"?

The religious Mathieu hoped that at length the result of his constant ministrations was commencing to bear fruit; other friends imagined that Madame de Staël's long wavering principles were at length culminating in Christianity, that henceforward the exalted theories of this ardent nature were to develop into moral actualities, that the longing for love was for the future to concentrate in the love of religion alone.

An unexplained melancholy entered her life once more; while possessing everything, except the right to reside in France, from which she shut herself out by her own actions, Germaine imagined herself one of the most unhappy beings in existence. She wrote to her dear friend Camille Jordan in this strain, telling him: "I could scarcely be more unfortunate in this life." She compares herself also to Job, while, however, expressing Job's spirit of resignation: "Why should not I accept all the ills from the hand of Him from whom I have received the benefits?"

While writing in her book *De l'Allemagne* on the subject of the purifying power of suffering, resulting from the desire to obtain the unattainable, Germaine gives vent to her feelings to Juliette Récamier on the subject of submission. Her turbulent spirit would appear to have become calmer, she feels peaceful; she tells Juliette: "I know that this calm comes of God and not from myself. The exciting existence I have hitherto led, and from which God has freed me, now lies behind me and gives me hope."

Further, she recognises that this hope comes by grace alone, but also fears that it is possible that grace may be again withdrawn.

Strange woman! One would not like to accuse her of pose, or of anything else than an inward searching for something higher and better than the mode of life that she had hitherto pursued. On the contrary, it is agreeable to suppose that one endowed with so much, both in the way of this world's goods and intellectual ability, was with trustfulness and honest endeavour reaching out towards something higher and better than the essentially human—we might almost say animal—existence with which up to the present she had appeared to be so eminently content. And yet, strange to relate, at the very time that Madame de Staël was apparently striving after a more spiritual frame of mind, she allowed once more the carnal side of her nature to get the upper hand of her, and took yet another lover!

The door of Germaine's heart, which had been shut after her farewells to Prosper de Barante, opened wide once more when a gallant young officer of Hussars came galloping on the scene.

There was a certain young man of a noble family of Geneva named John de Rocca, his name being spelt John in English fashion, and not Jean in the French style. He was handsome in appearance, attractive by nature, and of a singularly fearless disposition.

John was educated in the Paris Polytechnic and joined the French army, and when but twenty-two years of age was already fighting away hard in the

battles in Spain. After being transferred for awhile to the army in Flanders, John de Rocca found himself once more in Spain in the year 1809 and involved in constant fighting. He repeatedly distinguished himself and was rewarded for his gallantry with the Cross of the *Légion d'Honneur*. Eventually, shot down in a mountain pass by a band of guerrillas, Rocca was rescued from death by a young Andalusian maiden, who, struck by the charms of his personal beauty, took him to her home, where she concealed him until he had recovered from his wounds.

By the end of the year 1810 John de Rocca had drifted back to Geneva, and shortly afterwards Madame de Staël was also present in that city. Which of the pair first sought out the other is unknown, but it would appear to have been from the first a case of mutual passion being aroused between the gallant Hussar and the woman of letters, who was old enough to have been his mother. Wild and fearless as he had been when leading his men in the passes of Andalusia, upon one occasion the bold John de Rocca galloped down the stone steps of the hill quarter of Geneva to the Rue de la Cité, so as to pass under Madame de Staël's windows.

In the case of Rocca, we hear of no such incident as that recorded by Benjamin Constant, in connection with his dashing his watch to pieces when arrived the hour of midnight, since its hands then marked the fatal hour at which he was ordered to depart from his lady-love's chamber. Unfortunately, the same lady-love, now the lady-love of another man, placed no

restrictions upon the hours of the visits of the young Hussar.

Germaine, who such a short time previously had at Saumur left Prosper de Barante in floods of tears, was happy once more. At a time when she had abandoned all hope of love and romance, she had awakened the lasting attachment of a gallant young gentleman, and had become the object of his passionate devotion.

In the meantime, as the year 1811 wore on, the ever-faithful Mathieu de Montmorency, who was still exiled from Paris, was eating his heart out in his anxiety concerning his dear friend Germaine. When he had last parted from her she had been in such a state of depression, so agitated and nervous, that he longed to be with her once more to console her. Above all, Mathieu was greatly alarmed concerning Germaine's state of health. Vague reports commenced to reach Paris to the effect that Madame de Staël appeared to be "dropsical," and these reports were repeated to him in letters from his friends. De Montmorency wrote off at once to his *confidante*, Madame Necker de Saussure, to beg her to tell him the truth about their mutual dear friend. He urged her to conceal nothing from him—for he feared the worst. Madame de Necker only replied evasively, and thus the fears of the honest Mathieu were augmented. How far from the reality was the key to the mystery, which had never been suspected by the innocent Mathieu!

Upon April 17th, 1812, Madame de Staël brought

into the world a child of masculine sex, of which the father was John de Rocca. The matter could not be concealed from the gossips of Geneva or Paris, while everywhere went the rounds a satirical lampoon in verse, which was headed, "The Dropsical Woman." This biting skit was from the pen of the Prefect of Geneva, M. de Capelle.

Still perfectly unaware of the facts of the case, Mathieu continued to write to Madame Necker de Saussure, lamenting the circumstance of his being unable to go and nurse his sick friend. The Ministry of Police was, however, keeping a close watch on his movements, and for the moment his instructions were to remain at Montmirail, the residence of the Duc de La Rochefoucauld, whose son had recently married Mathieu's young daughter. He expected, it was true, to be allowed to move on and join his wife and daughter in June at Vendôme, and in the meantime he could probably have returned to Switzerland, had he been able to overcome the objections advanced by various members of his family to his going to comfort and watch over Madame de Staël in her supposed illness.

It was only upon his arrival at Vendôme that Mathieu learned that his friend had had an unexpected addition to her family. At the same time he was made aware of the fact that to escape from the tyranny of Napoleon, as exemplified by her being constantly watched by the Baron de Capelle, Germaine had fled from Coppet for a journey across Europe.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FLIGHT OF MADAME DE STAËL

Had it not been for the interest in her life supplied by a new lover, life at Coppet would indeed have been insupportable to Madame de Staël. Napoleon, knowing her nature, had punished her by frightening people away.

The young Danish Baron de Voght, was one of those who had from time to time spent many happy days under that hospitable roof, and he had remained after others had fled. Voght, however, also took alarm; he found the air of Coppet unhealthy, and departed. Then M. de Barante, who had been too obliging in the matter of placing the official seals on Germaine's papers, was removed, to be replaced in the Prefecture of the Leman by the Baron de Capelle. This gentleman had, after serving in the Republican armies, been made the Prefect of Livorno, or Leghorn, in Italy. Not far from Leghorn was Lucca, where reigned Napoleon's beautiful and volatile sister, Élisa Bacciochi, now become Grand Duchess of Tuscany. Capelle was a handsome and attractive person of thirty-five, who was found so agreeable by Élisa that the Emperor thought it advisable to remove him from his sister's vicinity and send him to Geneva.

Once there, the new Prefect had determined to

reconquer the Emperor's good will, and the first idea that occurred to him was to effect the conversion of Madame de Staël from an enemy of Napoleon to one of his flatterers. The Emperor, who had divorced Josephine and married the Arch-Duchess Marie Louise of Austria, had become the father of a son, the little King of Rome. Capelle thereupon represented to Germaine what a graceful act it would be on her part, and how well appreciated, should she devote her great talent to writing an appreciative notice on the subject of the birth of this Prince. All that he asked from her was " just five pages."

The scornful reply of Germaine was that she would " wish the baby a good wet nurse."

After this rebuff, Capelle had his knife into Madame de Staël, and exercised upon her a petty tyranny, by whenever possible interfering with her pleasures.

Germaine, however, rung the changes upon the Baron de Capelle, and upon one occasion, by telling him lies, fooled him utterly, going from Geneva to Aix les Bains, in Savoy, when she had informed him that she was merely driving to Coppet.

Savary heard of this visit into France, and reproved Capelle for not having been smart enough to prevent it, whereupon the Prefect replied to the Minister that he would not be caught napping a second time. Thenceforth, while ordering Madame de Staël not to go further than two leagues from Coppet, he also sent Schlegel away from her in a very peremptory manner.

At the time that Germaine had fooled the Prefect by going to Aix she very narrowly escaped being

placed under arrest by direct orders from Paris, but the Duc de Rovigo wrote that " for this one occasion " she need not be arrested. Her danger was, however, great should she again act in contravention of her orders, and already before the exile of Schlegel she had in a similar manner lost her friend Charles de Villers, who had been banished from his home and his papers seized, he himself being accused of treason.

It was evident that the Emperor was determined to smash up Coppet as a hotbed of agitation and the home of intrigue. Realising that she would in future be left with her Rocca in a solitude resembling that of Robinson Crusoe with his man Friday, Germaine resolved to escape from her desert island. This was not an easy matter. Capelle had a secret police spy on the premises at Coppet and was aware of her every move ; he was so well informed that he wrote everything that she did to the Duc de Rovigo, while laughing heartily at her loud lamentations and floods of tears upon the occasions of the exile of Mathieu and Juliette Récamier. " The house of Coppet has, it seems, gone into mourning," he wrote on September 2nd, 1811. " So much the better—it is one more lesson ! "

It was after Madame de Staël had been for some time committed to her liaison with John de Rocca that she definitely determined to take to flight. A great deal of disagreeable comment had been made upon her new connection with such a young man, and especially when it became evident that she was about to become a mother she could not help hearing occasional echoes of the laughter outside. Further,

there were quarrels in the house itself, Benjamin Constant, who had ventured to Coppet, and Rocca nearly cutting each other's throat about her.

Germaine, according to a letter from Bonstetten to his great friend, the Danish poetess Frederica Brun, had actually married Rocca secretly before the birth of her son. This letter of Bonstetten's was written on August 13th, 1817, and said that she had married him a second time in Sweden. Laughingly, Bonstetten remarks to his Frederica: "She could not believe herself sufficiently married."

Germaine had evidently determined to make Rocca marry her, since she had remarked long before: "I shall love him so much that he will finish by marrying me."

The position created by this marriage, which can hardly be called a marriage, since it was never acknowledged by Madame de Staël while she lived, could but be a very disagreeable one for Rocca, always compelled to be dragged, merely as her lover, in the wake of the celebrated woman who was determined not to give up her name. Careless as she was of public opinion, even Germaine herself occasionally felt the difficulties of her ambiguous and undefined position. When she was in England with Rocca she found herself compelled to claim the indulgence of her old friend Miss Berry, one of the well-known sisters of that name, while Byron never spoke of John de Rocca but as "Monsieur the lover." Lord Byron, however, thought well of the handsome young man, of whom he said: "I liked Rocca; he was a gentleman and a clever man. No one said better things or with a better grace."

Madame de Staël took flight from Coppet on May 23rd, 1812, after first having left her five weeks' old baby in the care of a doctor named Jurine. Going out as if but for an ordinary drive with Rocca, her daughter Albertine, and her younger son, she drove all day and night, until she reached a place in the Swiss Canton of Berne, near that city. Her son Auguste was in Berne, and had obtained passports for her from the authorities, and thence he returned with Rocca to Coppet, which place his mother had now sold to Auguste in order to prevent its seizure.

The passports obtained were for Austria, and had been made out in assumed names by the friendly Austrian Minister in Berne.

Just beyond this place Germaine was joined by William Schlegel, and together they sped on their way to Salzburg, where they were overtaken by Rocca, travelling in disguise on horseback. The appearance of her lover was a cause of great alarm, he being at first taken for a French police agent, but alarm soon turned to joy, and the journey was continued in peace, until Vienna was safely reached on June 6th, 1812.

Meanwhile at Geneva the flight of Madame de Staël did not become known to the authorities until June 2nd, and even then, so well had her plans been laid, the French police agents were completely put off the scent, and imagined that she had made off for one of the Russian ports, with the intention of reaching England.

That loving friend, Juliette Récamier, was very much hurt when she found that Germaine had actually

departed, taking with her Rocca instead of herself, for she had offered to share in the flight, of which she had been warned in advance.

Sismondi was also annoyed, and apparently felt the pangs of jealousy.

A third person who had a month or two earlier had his nose put out of joint by the appearance of Rocca on the scene was the young poet, Adalbert de Chamisso, who had been very much attracted by Germaine when he had stayed with her in France at the Château de Chaumont. Chamisso had followed her to Coppet, where he and Sismondi condoled with each other upon finding Madame de Staël bound by a connection which quite separated her from them. De Chamisso wrote a pretty poem which betrayed his ruined hopes, and confided it to Sismondi, who answered his friend with another copy of verses, in the same style of lament and disappointment. Thus it appears that, even in her middle age, Germaine had much to answer for where men's hearts were concerned.

CHAPTER XXIX

STRUGGLES IN VIENNA—SUCCESSES AT ST. PETERSBURG

THE idea uppermost in the head of Germaine was to get to Sweden, the birthplace of her husband, where, by an extraordinary series of events, her old fellow-plotter, General Bernadotte, had been elected Crown Prince, being recognised as his successor by King Charles XIII.

Could she but reach Bernadotte in safety, she would be sure of protection at his hands. How to reach Sweden was, however, the problem; the best way to do so appeared to be by Austria and Russia. In spite of the intimate connection of France and Austria, owing to the marriage of Napoleon with an Austrian princess, Madame de Staël trusted greatly to the fact of her former popularity in the latter country, and hoped, therefore, that the Emperor of Austria would not deliver her over into the hands of the French agents.

Germaine arrived in Vienna with an overweening idea of her own importance, but by no means the least of the struggles of her lifetime was to get out of the city and Austria once more without finding herself under arrest, and without having her Rocca torn from her to be handed over to the French army. For

notwithstanding that John de Rocca was on leave of absence, and incapable of serving on account of the effects of his wounds received in Spain, the French officers serving in Austria demanded that he should be handed over to them as a deserter.

Madame de Staël, on arriving in Austria, found that the members of the upper classes whom she had previously met were glad to welcome her again, since at heart they still all hated Napoleon, notwithstanding his recent alliance by marriage with the niece of their Emperor. The ruling authorities, however, looked upon her with dread, as an incubus through whom they might be compromised with the French. They would have liked to have got rid of her at once if possible, but as her passports, which she had demanded from the Emperor Alexander of Russia, did not arrive, the members of the Government were in a quandary. M. Otto, the French Ambassador, was, fortunately for Germaine, away. Should he return before she received her Russian passports it seemed more than probable that, rather than become involved upon her account, the Austrian authorities would hand Madame de Staël over to him.

In the meantime that lady carried things off with a very high hand in Vienna, and no incident in her career is more amusing than one from which it would seem as if she really considered it her due that Austria should plunge anew into war on her account, or rather on account of the young officer whom she dragged about in her train, with no other status than that of her paramour.

Notwithstanding that Madame de Staël was followed about everywhere by police, either mounted or in carriages, she was utterly undismayed and undeterred from going every day into society, and, further, she took Rocca with her to the big houses that she visited.

Word was sent to her to the effect that, since the French authorities were demanding the surrender of this gentleman, it would be wiser if Madame de Staël were to pay her visits alone.

It is recorded in Metternich's *Posthumous Papers* that, boiling over with rage, she rushed off to Prince Metternich's right-hand man, Hagen, the President of the Police, to complain.

"But, Madame," exclaimed the official, "surely you would not have us go to war on account of M. Rocca!"

"And why not?" retorted Germaine hotly. "Is he not my friend?"

Eventually, without waiting for her Russian passports, Madame de Staël started for the frontier by way of Galicia. Rocca and Schlegel were left behind to wait for passports and also for money, and, in a fearful state of anxiety regarding the possible fate of the former, Germaine drove away from Vienna at the end of June, 1812. Everywhere she passed she found a description of herself and one of Rocca posted up on the police stations, while in each successive circle ruled over by a Prefect that she passed through she was put to the greatest inconvenience, and harried concerning the validity of the local passports that she had received, and which were declared to be irregular.

Life was made a misery to Madame de Staël, her young son Albert and her daughter Albertine, who was now grown into an attractive girl, more than a child. Petty annoyances were piled upon her, and they grew worse daily. She hoped for relief upon arriving at the princely residence of her Russian friends, Prince Lubomirski and his wife. This place, named Lanzut, was quite close to the Russian frontier, but at the last stage before reaching it a police commissary was attached to Madame de Staël, with orders to keep her in sight and, moreover, not to allow her to rest more than eight hours in the residence of her Russian friends.

When she had arrived close to Lanzut, she saw the impetuous Rocca, who had somehow arrived there first, galloping back to meet her. Her agony lest he should be arrested was so great that, after wildly waving to Rocca to retire, Germaine fell down in a kind of fit. Her police commissary now disclosed a kindness of heart, in spite of all his vulgar familiarity, and, laying Madame de Staël down on the roadway, contrived to obtain cold water and resuscitate her. Upon arriving at the Lubomirskis' castle, however, he still insisted upon keeping Germaine in sight, and even wanted to sleep in her bedroom in order to prevent her from holding any private conversation with her host and hostess. The reason for this anxiety on the part of the Austrian official was that at that very time war was commencing between France, the ally of Austria, and Russia, and Napoleon with his Grand Army was actually beginning his celebrated invasion of the Muscovite dominions.

Heartily cursing the Germanic races, whom she considered that she had done so much to celebrate in her book *On Germany*, Madame de Staël drove over the Russian border on July 14th, 1812. Austrian grenadiers escorted her to the last, and she left Austria bitterly declaring the Monarchy, which she had known as powerful, just, and respected, to have been degraded to the lowest rank among the nations of the world by its alliance with Napoleon.

Russia was at this time the only country on the continent of Europe to which Napoleon's power did not in some form extend. It was therefore with unbounded satisfaction, after the weeks of persecution she had undergone on Austrian territory, that Madame de Staël passed the frontier. The French army barred the way to St. Petersburg; she therefore travelled southwards by way of Kieff, in order by this detour to reach Moscow.

Everywhere Madame de Staël was made welcome; in each successive place of importance through which she passed the Russian nobility and gentry flocked to meet her, not only to see in her the distinguished authoress, but to hail her as the enemy of Napoleon.

She arrived in safety at Moscow some time before the advent of the French armies, and there was largely entertained by all the celebrities, although she just missed the Emperor Alexander.

While being proud to receive the celebrated woman, Madame de Staël was not, however, quite as greatly appreciated by the Russian ladies and gentlemen as she thought that her merits deserved. They thought

that she talked too much, and it was wittily remarked of the exuberant Germaine that " her periods were too long and her sleeves too short."

At one big dinner, to which she was invited to meet the clever minds of Moscow, according to a humoristic account by the Russian Pouchkine, " she sat in the place of honour with her elbows on the table, rolling and unrolling a piece of paper in her fingers. She seemed in a bad temper. Several times she tried to speak and could not say what she wanted. Our *beaux esprits* ate and drank away, and seemed far more interested in their food than in her conversation."

The Russian people at the dinner were, in fact, like Germaine herself, rather bored, and sat silently eating, while waiting for Madame de Staël to say something really witty. " At last there fell from her lips something that was a *double entente*, and pretty broad, too ! The guests left the table quite reconciled to Madame de Staël ; she had made a pun ! They ran all over the town to spread it everywhere.

" To how great an extent must our high society have appeared empty to this woman ! She is accustomed to be surrounded by men for whom a lively movement of her heart, an enthusiastic word, is never lost. And here, not a thought, not a remarkable saying for three long hours, merely frozen faces and stiff attitudes. How bored she was ! How tired she looked ! She understood the level of the intelligence of these monkeys of civilisation. So she threw a pun at them and they pounced upon it ! "

From Moscow Germaine reached St. Petersburg,

but while there she was afraid that it would be reported in France that she was going to England, and that in consequence she might hear of the seizure of her home upon the Lake of Geneva, notwithstanding that she had transferred it to her son. Accordingly she wrote to Mathieu and other friends emphatically to deny that she had any intention of visiting *perfide Albion*. Nevertheless, the sight of a British flag floating from the mast of a warship in the Neva filled her heart with joy. There at last was the banner of freedom, the flag of the one country which so far had successfully defied the tyrant! Her eyes filled with tears.

St. Petersburg was full of the enemies of Napoleon, distinguished people of various nations, notably English and Spanish admirals and diplomatists. Here, then, was a place where Madame de Staël could enjoy herself, where, moreover, she and her enthusiasm could be better understood and appreciated than in beautiful but barbarous Moscow; that Moscow alas! so soon to be destroyed, but which she had been the last foreigner of note to view in its pristine beauty.

Among the foreign diplomatists present was the brilliant Prussian, Baron Stein, who, having been exiled from his own country by Napoleon, had fled to the Emperor Alexander, whose chief counsellor he had become, constantly stirring him up with his own hatred of France. Stein had long wanted to meet Germaine; he had already tried to do so at Moscow. In reply to a letter from her, he there called upon her. But his call was a little late; he arrived at midnight!

As she had not been expecting a Benjamin Constant, she had gone to bed.

When he first met Germaine, Stein was disappointed in her appearance. She was too thick, and mannish-looking into the bargain. But such eyes!—eyes like flames! Also she said rather terrible things—it was evident she had been educated in Paris! Stein sat with Madame de Staël on the sofa, when others standing near were delighted with the rapid give and take of their conversation. It was not at all like the stupid dinner at Moscow, described by the ironical Pouchkine.

Then Count Orloff gave a splendid dinner, and his private band played "God Save the King," whereupon there was great enthusiasm, of the sort beloved by Germaine. After "God Save the King" it was the turn of Madame de Staël. She read aloud stirring passages from the copy of her book *De l'Allemagne*, which she had saved from Napoleon and the Duc de Rovigo when they burned all the rest. Again immense enthusiasm, especially on the part of the Prussian, Stein. The chapter which she had chosen to read was, justly, the one in her book headed "On Enthusiasm." It was an ardent call to arms. All listened and were excited. Madame de Staël had among that mixed St. Petersburg society one of the successes of her life. For the moment all struggles were forgotten. She was on top and Napoleon nowhere—down at the bottom, where the united hatred of all the listeners combined to place him.

Soon there was another big dinner, given by the Grand Chamberlain of the Court. A toast was given:

" The success of the English and the Russian arms." Immense enthusiasm! But this toast meant distinctly the downfall of France! Madame de Staël was puzzled what to do. She got out of it by saying : " I drink to the downfall of the tyrant who oppresses France against Europe." The English and Russians applauded her.

CHAPTER XXX

GERMAINE'S POLITICAL SUCCESS

MADAME DE STAËL was soon received with honour by the Empress, the wife of Alexander I. of Russia, while the Emperor himself expressed a wish to meet her, which desire did not long remain unfulfilled.

The Emperor Alexander, at this time a man of thirty-five, had a gentle, chivalrous manner, eminently calculated to please a woman of the nature of Germaine. Possessed of deep intelligence, he saw through her from the first. Understanding that she wished to play a real political *rôle*, to become the counsellor of the great ones in Europe, Alexander recognised the mistake that had been made from the beginning by Bonaparte in driving her away from him, and not allowing her self-importance to be gratified. Resolved not to fall into a similar error, Alexander accepted Madame de Staël at her own value. When he flattered her, talked to her of the great interests of Europe, and lamented the errors into which he had previously fallen as the dupe of Napoleon, Germaine was delighted at thus finding herself played up to. She responded to the Emperor's advances with enthusiasm, and almost fell at his feet with delight when he confided to her his plans for the abolition of serfdom in Russia. When,

further, Alexander modestly lamented to Madame de Staël the fact that he was not a great General, she patted him on the back by assuring him that a good Sovereign was a far rarer commodity. As a matter of fact, the Emperor of Russia had had his experiences of war, having been present at the ill-fated battle of Austerlitz among his other experiences in the field.

Alexander replied politely with an air of self-abnegation and modesty when Madame de Staël impetuously informed him that his character "contained in itself a Constitution for his mighty Empire."

"Ah," he answered with a sigh, "should such actually be the case, I shall never have been anything but a happy accident."

Germaine was completely won over. Here was a prince who understood how to talk to a woman of intellect! Here was the match for the ill-mannered Corsican! The distinguished couple had met on equal terms, and, having done so, sought to make use of each other in helping to grind the same political axe, if on opposite edges.

Madame de Staël was anxious, above all things, for the advancement and glory of her friend Bernadotte, the Crown Prince of Sweden. It is probable that she already had him in her eye as the possible successor of Napoleon on the throne of France. It so happened that just at this critical moment, with the French army in Russia, the Emperor Alexander had need of the good offices of this same Prince Royal of Sweden. Owing to

the constant doubtful attitude of the King of Sweden, Alexander had been compelled to keep an army tied up in Finland, and these troops would now be of the greatest use to him to fight the French.

Although no mention of the fact is made by Madame de Staël in her *Ten Years of Exile*, the Duc de Rovigo, who knew everything that went on in Europe, has left it on record that at this first interview Alexander and Germaine between them discussed a plan of action. As a result of this, owing to the good offices of the latter, a personal conference was brought about between Bernadotte and the Russian Emperor at a place called Abo, a seaport, the result of which was apparently satisfactory. Upon his return from Abo, Alexander again saw Madame de Staël, and completely won her over with soft talk about his affection for the principles of the French Revolution and assurance that, had he not been utterly deceived by Bonaparte's profession of the same views, he would never have been taken in by him in the past to the extent of having become his ally. Having thus won Germaine's sympathy, he increased it by praising up to her the Prince Royal of Sweden.

Nothing more was wanted; the astute Emperor had done the trick! Madame de Staël saw before her the opportunity of playing a big political *rôle*. She determined at once to embark for Sweden and see if she could not bring about an alliance between that country and Russia. For surely such an alliance at such a moment would prove another nail in the political coffin of her enemy Napoleon Bonaparte, who with his

ALEXANDER I., EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

From an engraving after the painting from life by Wolkoff

[*Facing p.* 250

army was just then victoriously entering the city of Smolensk. Before the massive walls of this most ancient town on the Vistula, Napoleon had just won a brilliant battle, overthrowing the Russians commanded by Barclay de Tolly and Bagration.

This battle was fought on August 17th, 1812, and after it the French advance in the direction of Moscow had been continued. Decidedly it was necessary if possible to bring in the Swedes against the flank of the triumphant Corsican, and, bearing that object in view, in the middle of September Madame de Staël accordingly took ship for Sweden.

She sailed from the very port of Abo, where the conference had just taken place, but her voyage across the Baltic was an unlucky one. It was but a wretched sailing-ship of small size in which she had embarked, the sea was stormy, and the travellers were compelled to land on the Aland Islands, upon the shores of which their craft had been driven.

At length, on September 24th, 1812, Madame de Staël landed at Stockholm, accompanied by her second son, Albert, and her arrival created a sensation in the northern city.

As an instance of her importance, we may mention that track was being kept of her movements at the Foreign Office in Paris, where they were recorded. Thus, on September 25th, M. de Cabre, the French *Chargé d'Affaires* in Stockholm, thought it necessary to announce her arrival, while a letter of Germaine's to her old Swedish lover, Count Ribbing, was opened in the post-office at Hamburg, translated, and the

contents forwarded to Paris at the end of October. By thus keeping an eye on the correspondence of Madame de Staël passing through Hamburg, much was learned by the French authorities of her manœuvres in Sweden.

Despite his advance from the rank of a sergeant in the French regiment of Royal Marine to that of heir to the Swedish Crown, Bernadotte remained bitterly jealous of his Corsican brother-in-arms, now an Emperor and paramount in Europe.

He was likewise disappointed in Napoleon's attitude towards the kingdom over which he was one day to reign. Not only were the Swedish ships constantly pillaged by the French privateers, but the Swedish province of Pomerania was invaded by the French armies.

To add to these insults, Charles-Jean Bernadotte, who was already practically the ruler owing to the illness of Charles XIII. of Sweden, was treated by Napoleon with studied disdain, the French Ambassador, the Baron Alquier, showing towards him none of the respect due to a Crowned Head. By the Emperor of Russia he had, on the other hand, been embraced and treated as of equal rank with himself at the recent Conference at Abo.

Alexander had in a great measure restored the self-esteem of Bernadotte by his friendly courtesy, and now had sent Madame de Staël to still further improve the friendly relations between them, by getting the Prince Royal formally to set his hand and seal to a defensive alliance with Russia.

Germaine was received by this now Royal personage with open arms as an old and intimate friend. None better than she knew how to flatter his vanity and persuade him that he was the natural foil to Napoleon, whose downfall would depend on him.

At Stockholm she gave full vent to her hatred of Bonaparte. While intriguing with Bernadotte, her house became the resort of English and Russian agents; all the elements opposed to the Emperor assembled under her roof, and meanwhile of her son Albert de Staël she made an aide-de-camp to the Prince Royal.

Nor did Germaine stint her money in giving entertainments and balls. As Baroness of Staël-Holstein, she took her position as of the nobility of Sweden, and entertained in the largest way, befitting her rank. The members of the Corps Diplomatique were continually received under her roof.

While doing things thus on a large scale, secretly, Madame de Staël was carrying on her own diplomatic communications with Russia, where she had sure agents. She kept Russia and Sweden in close touch with one another, while at the same time insisting authoritatively upon Russia keeping its share of the bargain made through her, and sending a body of troops which had been promised to the Prince Royal.

Becoming the chief counsellor of Bernadotte, Germaine first excited him to cause the French *Chargé d'Affaires* to be conducted to the frontier by the police, and then was present in person when the Prince Royal administered a regular dressing-down to the

representative of Austria, because that country had not broken with France.

For once Madame de Staël had really become a power to reckon with in Europe, and although the Minister of Prussia made a great deal of fuss with the envoy of England on the subject of " feminine domination which might cause dangerous tittle-tattle," he had nevertheless to go tamely enough to the house of the eminent lady to meet the Prince Royal upon a very important occasion, which concerned the action of his own country.

Nor did Germaine leave Austria alone. Acting through Schlegel as her agent, she endeavoured to work upon the Emperor of Austria, causing him to be informed that the Prince Royal of Sweden desired him to break with Napoleon.

As a letter from Schlegel on this subject was intercepted in the post at Hamburg, the Foreign Office at Paris had once more an opportunity of learning what a dangerous enemy the Emperor had in Madame de Staël.

Her activity was indeed immense, and the ramifications of her intrigues reached to all countries, even to Poland, which country, by using the Emperor Alexander as her medium, she sought to separate from France.

While Bernadotte, anxiously but vainly awaiting men from Russia and money from England, was obliged to go slowly in the matter of making war preparations, bad news came to Stockholm—the French had entered Moscow !

Upon the receipt of this intelligence Germaine did not behave in the lofty manner which after the way in which she had been egging Bernadotte on to war he might have expected of her. On the contrary, her first thought was of self—not of Sweden! This country, having broken with Napoleon, and not obtaining the hoped-for assistance from its allies, was now between the devil and the deep sea. Madame de Staël, however, merely rushed to the Prince Royal with an outcry concerning her personal danger—she would be run down by the French armies, taken prisoner!

"Nonsense!" replied Bernadotte. "Have no fear! Bonaparte is done for." He spoke more boldly than he felt, but remained, nevertheless, in a spirit of nervous indecision.

Reassured as to her personal safety, Madame de Staël returned to the attack, by publishing anonymously in Hamburg a brochure of a violent nature, appealing to England, Russia, and Sweden to join hands to free Europe from the tyrant in a war of independence.

Being from the pen of Germaine, the word "liberty" naturally loomed largely in this pamphlet, the principal object of which seemed to be to warn Sweden of the dangers awaiting her should she be weak enough to be beguiled into entering Napoleon's "Continental System."

As for the Prince Royal, no praise was high enough for him; he was a very Paladin—a Bayard. With such a man to lead them—the conqueror in a hundred

battles—the Swedes would find a glorious destiny ahead of them. And so on—praise for Bernadotte, sarcastic depreciation for Bonaparte.

The brochure ended with a prophecy, which, dictated by hate, was none the less to come true. Speaking of Napoleon, it said of him that "yesterday one offered up incense to this gigantic idol; tomorrow, overthrown, the world would see in it nothing but the fragile monument of an insensate pride."

The eloquence of the style, the thoughts, the words, the expressions employed, pointed to Madame de Staël as the author of this pamphlet on *The Continental System in its Relation to Sweden.* When she denied having written it, and pointed to Schlegel as the author, people only jeered. For were not Germaine and Schlegel one and the same thing?

The struggles of Madame de Staël to rouse Europe against Napoleon were continued during that winter of 1812-1813 at Stockholm by the issue of another publication. This, which was entitled *An Essay on Suicide,* like the above-mentioned pamphlet, praised Bernadotte in extravagant terms, calling him "the hero of the century." This little work was not published anonymously, and being written in a lofty style, was calculated to increase the fame of Germaine as a writer. Its dominating theme, it need scarcely be mentioned, was, of course, the necessity of Europe to arouse herself from her lassitude and shake off the chains of slavery by which she was bound.

At length, all these efforts and exhortations had their hoped-for result. Bernadotte decided to take up

arms against France. By so doing, he expected with the help of Russia to obtain Norway as an adjunct for Sweden, while for himself Charles-Jean, now Prince Royal of Sweden, hoped to obtain a higher title—no less, indeed, than that of Emperor of the French, in the place of Napoleon, deposed.

CHAPTER XXXI

GERMAINE'S TRIUMPH IN LONDON

In the spring of 1813 Bernadotte went off to join the Headquarters of the Army of the North at Stralsund, a port of Northern Prussia. He not only took with him Albert de Staël, but also Schlegel.

By supplying the Crown Prince of Sweden with Schlegel in the capacity of secretary, Madame de Staël had, as it were, a liaison officer at the point of military operations, through whom she could send her instructions to Bernadotte, while learning all about his projects and movements.

After his departure, her mind remained gratified to think that her efforts had probably contributed to the future placing of Bernadotte on the throne of France. Her intention was, however, to make of him not another despot, but a purely Constitutional Monarch, one who would prove himself to be the friend of liberty, guided by the principles held by her father, Necker, at the time of the outbreak of the French Revolution. Left by herself, with only Rocca and Albertine in Stockholm, time passed heavily on the hands of a woman with Germaine's active brain. As a means of amusement she guided Rocca's pen in writing his elegantly-worded account of the Spanish wars in

which he had taken part, which was subsequently printed first in London and then in Paris. Her work accomplished, there remained nothing for Madame de Staël to do in Sweden. But whither could she go? She was an exile and homeless, and practically belonged to no country, had no fatherland.

Her thoughts turned longingly to Weimar, for with the Arch-Duchess Louise she kept up a warm correspondence. Germany was, however, no safe retreat for Germaine, as she knew well, while no other country on the Continent was open to her. For France, for Paris, she longed, but longing was in vain.

There was, however, one spot in Europe, although not on the mainland of the Continent, which she had once described as "a semi-paradise," and which Germaine now wrote that she considered as being her real native land. The beloved country of England seemed to spread wide its arms to receive her, and thither would she go as soon as she should be joined in Stockholm by her elder son Auguste, whom she expected. Albertine, Madame de Staël's daughter, had by this time grown into a tall and pretty girl, and an additional reason for going to London would be the opportunities she would find there of completing Albertine's education.

In the meantime, life was but a very weary thing. While living with Rocca, it is evident that that handsome young officer, notwithstanding his devotion for this woman old enough to be his mother, by no means alone filled the large heart of Madame de Staël. We find this organ now fluttering with thoughts of the past, turning once more to her fickle Benjamin of bygone

days. She writes to Benjamin Constant: "I may perhaps die. Who knows what God may require of us? I always keep letters of yours; I never take out my writing materials without taking them up and looking at the address. All that I have suffered through that handwriting makes me shudder, and yet I would fain see it again. My father and you and Mathieu share a part of my heart that is eternally closed. There I continually suffer, and always in a new way. I live in the Past, and were I about to be swallowed up by the waves, my voice would utter these three names—one of which alone was harmful to me. Is it possible that you brought such ruin—that despair such as mine could not restrain you? No, you are guilty, and only your admirable intellect can cause me any further illusions. Farewell! farewell! What I suffer you cannot understand."

Poor Germaine! One cannot but feel sorry for her, notwithstanding that she had inflicted quite as many tortures upon the heart of Benjamin as he on hers. That they were, however, the intellectual complement of each other's nature there could be no doubt.

The above letter was by no means to be the real farewell to Benjamin, for communications were maintained between the old lovers, these being frequently on political or literary subjects, until long after the downfall of Napoleon; while the night after Germaine died was passed by Benjamin watching over her body.

At length Auguste de Staël arrived at Stockholm, and then, with him, his sister Albertine and Rocca,

Madame de Staël left for England, staying at first in London in George Street, Hanover Square. Hardly had she settled into an English life once more when the sad news arrived of an extraordinary duel by which her boy Albert had lost his life. This youth, unlike his elder brother, who was quiet and seriously disposed, had always been undisciplined and boisterous by nature. He was, we may take it, a young fellow of determined character, as was exemplified when at the Castle of Lanzut in Galicia the Austrian Commissary had wanted to watch his mother by sleeping in her bedroom. Had he actually done so, Albert informed him he would have flung him neck and crop out of the window.

After first going to Stralsund with Bernadotte, Albert joined a regiment of Swedish Hussars as lieutenant, and then obtaining a transfer in order to serve under a friend named Colonel Tettenborn, he entered at Hamburg a regiment composed of volunteers of several nations. The unhappy young fellow appears to have served with great bravery in various battles before he became involved in a quarrel with a Cossack officer. Of the cause of this quarrel there is no record, but it terminated in a duel which was fought with sabres.

The Cossack officer was evidently not only very cunning with the weapon selected, but a very strong man, and soon brought the duel to an end by slicing Albert de Staël's head clean off his shoulders, as neatly as if it had been done by the guillotine.

From the remarks made concerning this matter by

Sismondi, in a letter which he wrote to his *chère amie* the Countess of Albany in September, 1813, Madame de Staël did not display overmuch feeling on hearing of this tragic fate of her second son. Sismondi remarked that she had borne the news *too courageously.*

Germaine was, however, soon to hear of another loss, and, since it was that of one of her early lovers, it may perhaps have affected her more deeply than that of the son with whom she was evidently out of sympathy. The Comte Louis de Narbonne had risen to a high position under Napoleon, notwithstanding that Madame de Staël had done everything in her power to prevent this notorious associate of her youthful days from entering the service of the hated Corsican.

Having survived in safety all the horrors and disasters of the fatal Russian campaign, Narbonne had been sent by the Emperor on a diplomatic mission to Prague. Apparently unsatisfied with his services in this capacity, Napoleon relegated Narbonne to the position of Commandant at a place named Torgau. Here this brilliant noble, whose birth was supposed to have been the result of a terrible scandal in the family of Louis XV., succumbed like a dog in a ditch to the ravages of typhus.

Germaine arrived in London on June 22nd, 1813, and there she had a triumphant reception, since everybody thronged to meet the illustrious enemy of Napoleon. Soon her friend Miss Berry was able to say: "If one wishes to meet the Ministers in London, it is necessary to go to the house of Madame de Staël."

By the Queen of George III., by the Duchess of

York, by the dissolute Prince Regent, she was received with distinction, while of those who are given out as having hurried to pay their court to Germaine we have a formidable list, containing the names of so many noble lords and their wives that to quote them would seem like quoting a string of names taken at random from the Peerage of the day.

Her glory was at its height ; she was recognised as a power, while even her humble hanger-on, John de Rocca, came in for his share of attention, which would have been much greater if only Germaine had had the honesty to declare that her own rightful name was now likewise Rocca, and not Staël.

In London she talked and she talked ; she preached, she held forth, until she lost breath and her hearers lost patience. When she did not talk she wrote—in reams !—endeavouring to teach the Londoners all about their own glorious Constitution, their own wonderful land of liberty.

Among the very first to meet Madame de Staël was Lord Byron. Modestly he tried to put her right on the subject of the glorious British Constitution, explaining to her that it was not really half so fine a thing as she painted it. She would not, however, listen to him for a moment, and continued to thrust it down the throats of the misguided English that they did not really in the least understand or appreciate their own happiness. Byron was not particularly complimentary to the distinguished lady. At one time he wrote to Moore : " I am to travel sixty miles to meet Madame de Staël. I once travelled three thousand to get

among silent people, and this same lady writes octavos and talks folios ! "

On another occasion Lord Byron wrote—also to his friend Tommy Moore : " She is for the Lord of Israel and the Lord of Liverpool—a vile antithesis of a Methodist and a Tory—talks of nothing but devotion to the Ministry, and, I presume, expects that God and the Government will help her to a pension."

At a later date the distinguished poet, of whom Germaine said that " he was the most seductive man in England," made other comments on Germaine that may have been true but which she would scarcely have appreciated. " Madame de Staël made very long speeches to those only accustomed to hear them in the Houses of Parliament. She interrupted Whitbread, she declaimed to Lord Liverpool, she misunderstood Sheridan's jokes for assent ; she harangued, she lectured, she preached English politics to the first of our Whig politicians the day after her arrival in England, and, if I am not very much misinformed, preached politics no less to our Tory politicians the day after. The Sovereign himself, if I am not in error, was not exempt from this flow of eloquence."

Such was Madame de Staël in London in 1813 !

CHAPTER XXXII

GERMAINE AGAIN IN FLIGHT

GREAT indeed was the success of Madame de Staël when her big book *On Germany* was published in London in the month of October, 1813. At the expiration of only three days the whole of the first edition was exhausted. The book was, nevertheless, a little out of date, since, without waiting for its appearance, the Germanic countries had of their own initiative done what they were exhorted to do in its pages: shaken off their lethargy and servitude and combined with Russia and each other against Napoleon. As Goethe said, if only *De l'Allemagne* had appeared earlier all the events of that eventful year 1813 would have been credited to the promptings of its author; nevertheless, he mentioned it as having an immense influence, appearing when it did.

After his disastrous retreat from Russia in the preceding winter, Germaine's old enemy was passing through a terrible year, battle succeeding battle in every direction; while, despite the combination of so many countries against him, Napoleon continued to gain success after success wherever he commanded in person in the field.

At the very time of the appearance of Germaine's great book in London, luck was, however, at length

definitely turning against the man who had, several years earlier, ordered ten thousand printed copies of that book to be burned, and thus had perhaps retarded the uprising of Europe against him by retarding the publication of the book.

At Leipsic, in Saxony, there raged from October 16th to 18th, 1813, what was known as the great Battle of Nations, one of the most bloody of all the encounters that brought about the delivery of Europe from the domination of France. In this tremendous battle, Napoleon commanded about a hundred and eighty thousand, while the opposing allies, under Bernadotte, Marshal Blücher, and Prince Schwarzenberg, amounted to the enormous number of three hundred thousand men. The allies won a complete victory, the losses of the French amounting to sixty-eight thousand killed, wounded, and prisoners.

After this battle and the French evacuation of Leipsic, the invasion of France by the allies followed. Notwithstanding that in February, 1814, the wonderful Napoleon won four battles in four successive days, when he had marched off in one direction his Generals, Marmont and Mortier, were attacked successfully in another, with the result that Paris surrendered on March 30th.

While these tremendous events were astonishing the world, Madame de Staël in England continued to plot for the elevation of Bernadotte. A cabal of four was composed, herself as the prime mover, with Benjamin Constant, Schlegel, and the Crown Prince of Sweden as the other three.

The history of this extraordinary affair with its various ramifications is most interesting and remarkable. At one time Bernadotte not only took the trouble to go and meet Constant in Hanover, but actually flattered and embraced him.

All might have gone well, and the intrigues of Germaine have resulted in placing Bernadotte on the throne of France, had it not been for his own excessive caution in not wishing to hurt French feelings. In England it was recognised that the Crown Prince of Sweden was too tender in his proclamations and seemed to be over-anxious to avoid the humiliation of his fellow-countrymen. This fact lost Bernadotte both British sympathy and help, which took instead the direction of the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty.

When Paris fell, Bernadotte had not even headed his army to enter the capital with his allies. By his over-carefulness he lost his chance. On the other hand, the brother of the guillotined Louis XVI. issued a proclamation in which he styled himself Louis XVIII., his brother's little son, starved to death in the Temple by the shoemaker Simon, having been nominally King Louis XVII.

The proclamation was hailed with enthusiasm by all the old Royalist party, and while that wriggling snake Talleyrand hurried to leave Napoleon, who had retired with his army to Fontainebleau, Benjamin Constant, another turncoat, deserted the cause of Bernadotte and rushed off to Paris, so as to be on hand and get what he could out of the Bourbons in the event of their

now probable restoration. "Let us serve the good cause and serve ourselves!" writes Benjamin at this time in his *Journal Intime.*

Germaine de Staël, however, remained staunch and held to the cause of her friend, until she received an intimation from Bernadotte himself to the effect that he knew that the game was up and that in future he would have to content himself with becoming the King of Sweden. While writing to express his affectionate thanks to Madame de Staël, he displays his usual caution in the phrase, "I prefer being wise rather than brilliant."

The reflection occurs to one that his wisdom in not making a struggle for the throne of France has been justified in the sequel. He might by playing his cards well have succeeded, but who knows if he and his would have been able to retain the French throne even if he had attained it? In Sweden Bernadotte founded a new dynasty, which still exists; but where are all the Bourbons and all of the Bonaparte family to-day? Of the three Bourbon kings who have, since 1814, successively sat upon the French throne, and one Bonaparte Emperor, two of the former, Charles X. and Louis Philippe, died in exile, while such was also the fate of Napoleon III. All of these monarchs died in England.

While the warring of the armies was continuing in France, the warring of the parties was agitating minds in England. Before Napoleon had signed his first abdication, and was relegated to the miserable sovereignty of the Island of Elba in April, 1814, the

efforts made by the Bourbons in England to court Madame de Staël were positively ludicrous. They hated this woman, with her known Republican feelings, her incessant talk of liberty. They hated her all the more as Necker's daughter, for had not her father in his efforts to reform the finances of France ruthlessly cut down all the charges enjoyed by the idle hangers-on of the old Court? Had he not also brought the first glimpse of liberty to France when he imposed upon Louis XVI. the summoning of the States General in 1789?

Nevertheless, like fawning curs, the Bourbons came to lick the hand of Madame de Staël at the time when Napoleon's fate still hung trembling in the balance. Messengers were sent to her from the man who prematurely called himself Louis XVIII., begging her to condescend to lend the aid of her pen and her voice to back up his desire to regain the Bourbon throne. Even the Duc de Berri, the son of the worthless Comte d'Artois who subsequently became Charles X., came in person to beg at her feet for her assistance. To both the reply of Germaine was, if a definite refusal, also one calculated to raise a smile. In their efforts to flatter, they had told her that the English press had declared that she was "the first woman in the world." Again, acting on behalf of Louis XVIII., and seeking to suborn her pen, the Comte Edward Dillon promised her "anything that she might desire for her services."

To the honour of Madame de Staël, she snapped her fingers in the faces of these suppliants. How she must have laughed in her sleeve when replying mendaciously:

"I never mix myself up in politics." The joke was really a good one, when the whole of her past career was known to all the world! What else but "mix herself up in politics" had Germaine done ever since the outbreak of the Revolution? From that time Germaine had continued to be imbued with the revolutionary idea. If in the beginning she had sought to associate herself with Bonaparte, she had been attracted by the man personally, and, moved by her feminine vanity, had sought to gain his appreciation and share his triumphs, she had nurtured also other ideas.

These were that hand in hand she and the young General, the conqueror of Austria, might have upheld the cause of liberty, together maintained the Republican spirit so utterly opposed to all the old traditions of the Bourbons. Bonaparte, whether as man and possible lover, as First Consul or Emperor, had unfortunately disappointed her, and she had become his enemy. That was not, however, a reason why she should ally herself with his enemies of the old dynasty, from whom she could expect nothing save an effete, retrograde movement towards the past.

When the armies of the allies arrived in Paris, the one thing most dreaded by Madame de Staël was the stifling of the revolutionary spirit. While the allies attacked Bonaparte alone she rejoiced in their successes, but now that it became plain to her that they were attacking France also, and, moreover, hated France, from a recollection of the successes of the French revolutionary armies even before Napoleon's

day, she withdrew her sympathies. Meanwhile her pity for France was aroused. Germaine had not foreseen the invasion of France as a possible result of the ardent campaign she had herself carried into many lands against Napoleon, and now that the country was overrun with Cossacks she was in despair.

Madame de Staël left London in May, 1814, and returned to Paris after an exile of ten years. From the moment of her landing to find Calais occupied by Prussian soldiers she received a shock, and when she had traversed camps occupied by the troops of all nations on her journey, and had further beheld the bivouacs of the enemies of her country in the gardens of the Tuileries, her nerves were shattered.

What horrified Germaine above all was to behold the indifference with which the people of Paris looked upon the troops of all nations thronging the streets. The red coats of the English, the white uniforms of Austria, the strangely attired Russians and high-plumed Prussians attracted no more than passing attention. There was no sign of hatred on the part of the people, nothing but a calm air of resignation to accomplished facts.

Germaine, shortly after her arrival in Paris, was able to gratify her wish, which she had had for years, of going again to the Opera. When, however, she found herself mounting the staircase between two rows of Russian soldiers, and entered a house containing foreigners in uniform, without one of the old familiar faces among the crowd, she felt saddened. She wrote that she was " humiliated to behold the grace of

France displayed before these sabres and these moustaches, as if it were a matter of duty to amuse the conquerors."

Louis XVIII. had arrived, backed by the bayonets of the allies, but the reappearance in Paris of Madame de Staël attracted quite as much attention as that of the new Bourbon king, who had never shed a drop of his blood in the defence of his kingdom. Her power now was greater than that exercised by any woman of the century. "England, Russia, and Madame de Staël" were quoted as the three powers of Europe, and her salons were crowded by the distinguished people of every nation. All parties, all societies, all worlds were present at Germaine's reunions.

Among the foreigners of distinction whom at this time she was in the habit of receiving we find the Duke of Wellington, Canning, the Emperor Alexander and the Grand-Duke of Saxe-Weimar. As for her French friends, they, of course, included Mathieu, Talleyrand, and Benjamin, while among the Prussians was occasionally to be seen Gentz, as also the distinguished Humboldt.

Of course it was quite impossible for the new King, Louis XVIII., to refuse to receive Madame de Staël, although there was no love lost between them. What was, however, the attitude towards her of his niece the Duchesse d'Angoulême, the very ungracious daughter of Louis XVI., who presided as mistress at the Court, is not recorded.

The new order of things had scarcely been got into running order when, in the beginning of March, 1815,

Napoleon calmly walked out of his idiotic little sovereignty of Elba and landed on the shores of France like a bombshell. Oh, what a rushing about was then to be seen in Paris! Nearly everybody who had anything to fear, from the King downwards, ran away as fast as they could go. Although Juliette Récamier declined to accompany her friend, preferring to stay and take her chances in Paris, Germaine drove off to Coppet, leaving the capital on March 10th, for she was terrified lest the Emperor should imprison her.

Her last thought on leaving was for Benjamin Constant, who had just published a most offensive article against Napoleon, in which he likened him to Attila, King of the Huns. At the moment of starting, she sent a hurried note to Madame Récamier, in which she begged her friend to insist upon Benjamin losing no time in leaving Paris, and pointing out that the road to Switzerland was open and safe

Ever since the abdication of the Emperor in the preceding April Madame de Staël had ceased to feel towards Napoleon with the old rancour, for hers was not the disposition to kick an enemy when down. Moreover, she had kept on good terms with Joseph Bonaparte, who had been first King of Naples and then King of Spain, since she had seen him last at Mortfontaine. Joseph had now become Germaine's neighbour at Prangins, in Switzerland. With Murat, who after marrying Napoleon's sister Caroline had succeeded Joseph as King of Naples, Madame de Staël had likewise remained on friendly terms after the downfall of his great brother-in-law. When Murat

had refused to resign his kingdom, she had written to him in gushing terms, even going the length of saying : " I adore you, not because you are a King, not because you are a hero, but because you are the real friend of liberty."

Louis XVIII. had kept up the old institution of the " Black Cabinet," and thus had possession of some of Madame de Staël's correspondence with members of the Bonaparte family. The Bourbon King, who had not forgotten how Germaine had refused to help him to regain his crown, was through the means of these letters able to inflict a crushing and humiliating blow to her pride. He caused them to be returned to her by a Minister with the following reproof :

" Madame, here are your letters to the King of Naples ; I give them back to you and you can send them off. The King has read them. You can, Madame, continue to write and receive letters, you can travel in France, leave France, return to it, make your domicile in it. So little importance is attached to all that you do, to all that you say, to all that you write, that the Government wants neither to know it, to trouble you about it, or permit that you should suffer the slightest anxiety concerning either your projects or your mysteries."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE TWO MILLIONS

The time has come when reference must be made to that attractive girl, Albertine de Staël, concerning whom the Comtesse de Boigne gives the following description in her charming *Memoirs*: "In spite of her hair of somewhat daring colour and a few freckles, Albertine de Staël was one of the most delightful persons I have ever met, and her face had an ideal and angelic purity such as I have never seen in anyone else. Her mother was very happy and very proud of her. She was thinking of marrying her, and suitors soon came forward."

It will be remembered that Benjamin Constant was always supposed to be the father of Albertine, to whom he was devotedly attached, and as his hair was red that fact probably accounted for the somewhat daring shade referred to in the tresses of the attractive daughter of Madame de Staël.

In considering the history of the intellectual mother, it is always a matter of surprise to the student of her characteristics that, if merely for the sake of the charming daughter, she did not observe more decency, more *retenue* in her relations with her male friends. Germaine's conduct at Coppet and elsewhere was

shocking, even after she had reached middle age, and must indeed have been a lamentable example to the young girl, whose features, nevertheless, as we learn, retained " an angelic purity."

The Comtesse de Boigne continues : " Madame de Staël was accustomed ever since her daughter's childhood to say that she would be able to oblige her to make a love match, and I certainly think that she used her authority to lead her daughter's choice to a duke and a peer, a wealthy *grand seigneur*. It was by more personal gifts that the Duc de Broglie justified the preference accorded him."

Exactly what the Comtesse means by the above is difficult to understand. Firstly, the remark that Madame de Staël would be " able to oblige her daughter to make a love match " seems involved ; and, secondly, the reference to the " more personal gifts " of the young Victor de Broglie is misleading. The fact is that Madame de Staël's mind was for long filled with an obsession to bring about this match, but that the young man sought to obtain with his bride very material gifts, in the shape of the two millions of francs that had been advanced by her grandfather, M. Necker, to the Treasury of Louis XVI.

Victor de Broglie was from his position and disposition everything that Germaine aspired to in a son-in-law. She had known his mother, who by her second marriage had become the Marquise d'Argenson, from the days of the Reign of Terror, when she had been able to help her to escape from prison. This did not prevent the fact that the Broglie family all looked

upon a marriage with Madame de Staël's daughter as a *mésalliance*, and stood out for an immense dowry to gild the pill of the banker Necker's granddaughter.

Now it can be understood why, in spite of numerous rebuffs, Germaine continued, after the advent to power in 1814 of the Bourbon king, to violently clamour for the repayment of the two millions which she had failed in the year 1805 to recover from the Government of Napoleon. After much harrying, Louis XVIII. had declared himself willing to include Necker's two millions, left in the State Treasury, in the sum which the nation had engaged to pay towards the debt the former Royal family had incurred while occupying the throne.

Should she now obtain this sum, it was arranged that it should be handed over by Madame de Staël to the young Duc de Broglie with her daughter. It was, however, perfectly understood by her that it was to be a case of no two millions, no marriage !

All seemed to be shaping well and a payment before long to have become possible, when the scene changed ; for on March 5th, 1815, Napoleon, after escaping from Elba, had landed near Cannes, while the King had run away from Paris.

Germaine had already visited Coppet since her return from England in the preceding spring, and while there had kept up friendly relations with the ex-King Joseph, who was living not far away. She is said to have been able to render certain services to this staunch friend of former days, and we can only imagine that she may have helped him with monetary assistance

in this time of his misfortunes. A strange story is related in the collection made by the Baron du Casse of the voluminous desultory memoirs of King Joseph Bonaparte, by which it appears that Madame de Staël was also not only willing, but able, to be of service to his brother Napoleon.

While he was at Elba, it came to her knowledge that two hired assassins were about to proceed to that island to murder the ex-Emperor. She hurried to Prangins, and finding Joseph at dinner, and entertaining the tragedian Talma, acquainted the ex-King with the facts. Her magnanimity was so great that she offered to Joseph herself to go off at once to Elba, to warn Napoleon of his danger. Talma was not going to be outdone in generosity, and insisted that he should be the one to go on this mission.

To Joseph's level mind it appeared that it would be advisable that some less-known person than either Germaine or the famous actor should be sent to Elba, to have an opportunity of getting through in safety.

He took his measures accordingly, but at the same time informed his brother of the circumstance that his old enemy Madame de Staël had generously wished to fly to his rescue in person. Through his brother, after he had made his escape, Napoleon sent a message to Germaine, to the effect that he was grateful to her "for having been so generous to him in the time of his adversity."

The ice was now broken between the old antagonists, and that at a time when each had need of the other. No sooner was Napoleon back in power at

Paris than Germaine sent Joseph to ask him to confirm the order made by Louis XVIII. to the effect that she was to receive her two millions.

King Joseph sent her a most amiable reply, written at his brother's request. Into this had been dovetailed a little judicious flattery on the subject of her book *On Germany*. The Emperor said that he had read it while at Elba, saw no harm in it, and regretted that he had ever allowed the censors to prevent its publication. As we know, it had been Napoleon himself who had caused the suppression, but Madame de Staël swallowed the flattery and the excuse together, and the more readily as Napoleon now declared his intention of abolishing the censors and permitting absolute liberty to the press.

His moderation in all matters delighted Germaine. None of those who had deserted his cause to serve the Bourbons were punished, while the Emperor sent for Benjamin Constant, who had so recently abused him, gave him an office, and asked for his assistance in drafting new and constitutional measures calculated to inspire all parties alike with a sense of security.

While the allies were once more combining to attack the former tyrant of Europe, he himself, while not neglecting to take precautions for defence, declared that he only wished for peace: peace by which liberty would be ensured, as well as good government, throughout Europe. To carry out his measures, Napoleon soon felt that he had need of the assistance of Madame de Staël, concerning whom he made the remark to his brother Lucien Bonaparte: "I find that

I was wrong. Madame de Staël has made me more enemies abroad during the time of her exile than she could ever have done in France."

When Germaine was invited to give her aid by rallying those of the old Constitutional party to the now apparently repentant Emperor, her hesitations were soon forgotten, owing to the assurance made her by Joseph that she would no doubt receive her money as soon as State exigencies would permit of its being available. For the moment, the Emperor was compelled to meet very great expenses for the consolidation of affairs in France. He had, however, no doubt that it would soon be possible to do Madame de Staël justice.

To settle the matter and definitely bribe Germaine to come over to Napoleon, there arrived a most cunning letter from Fouché, now the Duke of Otranto. The terms of Fouché's almost affectionately-worded epistle are as follows :

"Madame,

"I had the intention of writing you a long letter. I should have much pleasure in talking to you, to tell you of all the interest that the Emperor has taken in your affairs, concerning the delicate position of Mademoiselle de Staël. I have just come from the Council of Ministers, and have only just got the time left to offer you my homages and to tell you how very happy I shall be the day that I shall be able to accelerate the marriage of your dear daughter. I understand how great must be the impatience of him who

will have the happiness of gaining her hand. Believe me, Madame, I shall not forget you. It is not only your mind which attaches me to you but your excellent heart.

"Le Duc d'Otrante."

The formerly recalcitrant Constant had now gone back, bag and baggage, to the potentate whose patronage he had formerly so ill repaid by flouting him from the floor of the Tribunat. He was now, under the inspiration of Napoleon, engaged upon what was humorously termed his "Benjamism," that is to say, his amendments to the Constitution.

When Germaine had seen these, she was eminently gratified to think that her former lover, who had, as it were, been brought up in statecraft under her own eye, had succeeded so well. She sat herself down with her pen and wrote off to Joseph a commendation, intended, of course, for the master's eye. It was couched in the following words—remarkable words indeed for a Madame de Staël, when all that had gone before is recalled to mind. "The additional articles are everything that is wanted for France, nothing but what is wanted, not more than is wanted. The return of your brother is prodigious, and exceeds all imagination!"

It was evident that the net of the fowler had not been spread in vain, and Germaine was the bird caught in its meshes. By being bribed with promises, by being flattered, above all by being treated as a power worthy of being consulted, Madame de Staël was

conquered at the end of the long struggle between herself and Napoleon. Willingly, she now not only lowered her arms, but joined her Benjamin in the camp of the conqueror.

While Lucien Bonaparte now came to establish himself in Switzerland close to the gates of Coppet, a wail went up from the deserter Talleyrand, now present at Vienna, when he learned of the defection of Benjamin and Germaine. The latter was, however, badly in need of her two millions and not going to be diverted from her object by any Viennese howls, and especially as Victor de Broglie appeared to be cooling off, concerning which circumstance Benjamin was writing ironically.

To be revenged upon Constant, Madame de Staël replied angrily, reminding Benjamin that he would do well to repay at once at least half of the eighty thousand francs that he had borrowed from her to buy a house with. At the same time, she told Constant to remind the Emperor that she was one whose gratitude was always to be relied on—the inference being that she wished he would hurry up and pay the two millions.

One can almost see the smile upon Napoleon's face and hear him chuckling some such sentence as, "Doesn't she wish she may get it"; for he doubted the sincerity of that gratitude. If not perhaps more sincere, the Emperor was certainly more clever than Madame de Staël, and now that he had succeeded after so many long years in conquering that arrogant lady's opposition he proposed to make use of her services.

Above all things, while busy arming the nation,

Napoleon was anxious to impress upon Lord Castlereagh, the English Premier, and also upon the Prince Regent, the fact that his intentions were pacific, and would so remain if only he were left unmolested. This assurance could be given by no one more likely to be believed than the woman so popular in England, who was well known to be Bonaparte's bitter enemy.

Mr. Crawford, the American Ambassador, was returning to the United States by way of England, and had promised Joseph to take over with him any letters confided to his care. A letter was written by Madame de Staël and, by way of caution, addressed to Crawford himself, although in fact intended for the eye of the important personages whom it was sought to impress in London.

M. Thiers, in his *Consulat et Empire*, states that the letter was actually forwarded by the American Ambassador, in one of his own, dated April 29th, 1815, to Lord Castlereagh, at Jermyn Street, London, and that both of them were subsequently found among that noble lord's despatches. It purported to expose the real condition of affairs in France, mentioned that the whole nation had rallied to the Emperor's cause, showed the great danger to the allies should they again attack Napoleon, through whom, if left alone, liberty and repose would now come to France. One of the most remarkable features of this most eloquent appeal to England by Germaine was that in it, the better to gain her object, she cunningly sought to raise a spirit of jealousy and emulation between the British Prince Regent and the Emperor Alexander of Russia. Madame

de Staël sneered at Alexander, the friend with whom she had worked hand in hand over Bernadotte's affairs, and who had headed the first European Coalition which caused the march on Paris and Napoleon's abdication. While ironically calling the Czar "Agamemnon, King of Kings," she patted the Prince Regent patronisingly on the back, praised him up in unmeasured terms, and urged him to show himself superior to the Russian. Germaine, after a due administration of flattery, proceeded to beg the Prince Regent to crown his name for ever with glory by assuming the beneficent *rôle* of the God of Peace.

As is well known, there was at that time in the English Parliament a strong Opposition, headed by Whitbread and Tierney, strongly in favour of allowing France to choose her own ruler and govern herself in her own way. Had this powerful letter of Napoleon's now ardent advocate in favour of peace fallen into the hands of this party, its influence would probably have been far-reaching, and the history of the world been altered.

While, however, the Opposition were never allowed to see it, by Castlereagh the appeal was disregarded, and that worthless character, the Prince Regent, had therefore no opportunity of bedecking his corpulent form in a manner becoming to one of the gods of Olympus.

The ruling party in England, like the country, only knew one thing, which was that it hated and distrusted Napoleon. Had Madame de Staël been on the spot, she might, with her endless floods of words, perhaps

have been able to bring round to her new way of thinking those Ministers whom Miss Berry had formerly mentioned as "only to be met in her drawing-room." She was not, however, in London, and the Ministers, who had chiefly appreciated Germaine as the downright hater of the Corsican, were spared her eloquence. Nor did the British Government of that day believe in the principle of the "self-determination of States," especially when it concerned that France upon which, by her own blind rancour, Madame de Staël had herself already helped to heap up such humiliations.

As a consequence, Madame de Staël's tardy advocacy of Napoleon and attempt to work in his interests fell as flat as ditchwater. While her intentions may have been, and probably were, honest where France was concerned, for which her heart had bled when she had seen it humiliated by the presence of the foreigner, it seems clear to all who have studied Germaine's character that her support of the Emperor at this late period was purely interested. At the bottom she had never forgotten how, when merely a young General, and subsequently as First Consul, he had repeatedly rejected her unwomanly advances. That this was the case we shall presently show. For the moment she was, however, actuated by interested motives. Her excessive vanity had been won by his flattery administered through his brother Joseph, and further, through Napoleon alone had she any possibility of recovering her two millions and accomplishing her longed-for project of marrying Albertine to the Duc

de Broglie. After the receipt of Fouché's beguiling letter her hopes of bringing off this wedding successfully had become very great. These, then, were the reasons why Madame de Staël, who had shrieked all over Europe against Napoleon and raised up countless enemies to bring about his downfall, was now licking his hand like a fawning puppy and acting as his tool.

The two millions were, however, the key to the lock of the door of Germaine's heart. As the months passed and she did not see them coming along, but, on the contrary, money pouring out in streams for war preparations, her enthusiasm began to wane. Presently it vanished altogether. Madame de Staël evidently began to think that Europe was again likely to prove too strong for the man who had been once her hero, and whose ally she had recently shown herself to be. Consequently, what did she do? Alas, that we should have to record it! Germaine de Staël followed the example of Talleyrand, whom she had loved so much, and the other rats. She became a deserter of the worst description!

Should the allies attack Napoleon in overpowering force, should they succeed once more in placing the Bourbon on the throne, the two millions, already promised by Louis XVIII., would be within her grasp. The happy marriage of Albertine to a great peer of the realm of France would become an actuality. With her pockets full of gold, Albertine would conduct Victor de Broglie to the altar, rather than thither be conducted by him.

Up, then, with the cause of the allies! Down once

more with that of Napoleon Bonaparte, the man who had refused to accept her as the partner of his glories when she had so unrestrainedly endeavoured to fling herself into his arms!

Clearly the time had come to pick up once more the flowing pen—this time to employ it to write to Russia, to the Emperor Alexander, that great man whose Cossacks had, as Germaine had herself so bitterly regretted, only a year ago been enjoying themselves, burning, pillaging the fair plains, outraging the fair women of France!

And what will Madame de Staël say to him? Will she jeeringly hail Alexander, as in her recent letter to England, as "Agamemnon, King of Kings"?

No, this would be perhaps the better way: "Everything reduces itself to this, that you, Sire, should recommence."

It would be wise also to remind the Russian that he is "the Knight of Europe," while the Corsican, once such a hero, has again become nothing but "the man whom we detest"!

It was but a short time after the despatch of Madame de Staël's letter, full of flattery for the Czar, that the allies met Napoleon on the field of Waterloo, where the giant, to whom the writer had so lately succumbed, himself succumbed, to rise no more!

After the second restoration of the Bourbon King, Madame de Staël duly recovered her two millions. Having had the satisfaction of seeing Albertine pass into the arms of Victor de Broglie, Germaine de Staël

did not live long to enjoy her happiness in the Paris for which she had so often longed in her days of exile. She died two years after the Battle of Waterloo, on July 14th, 1817, and was buried at Coppet, near her father, whom she had so greatly loved.

THE END

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